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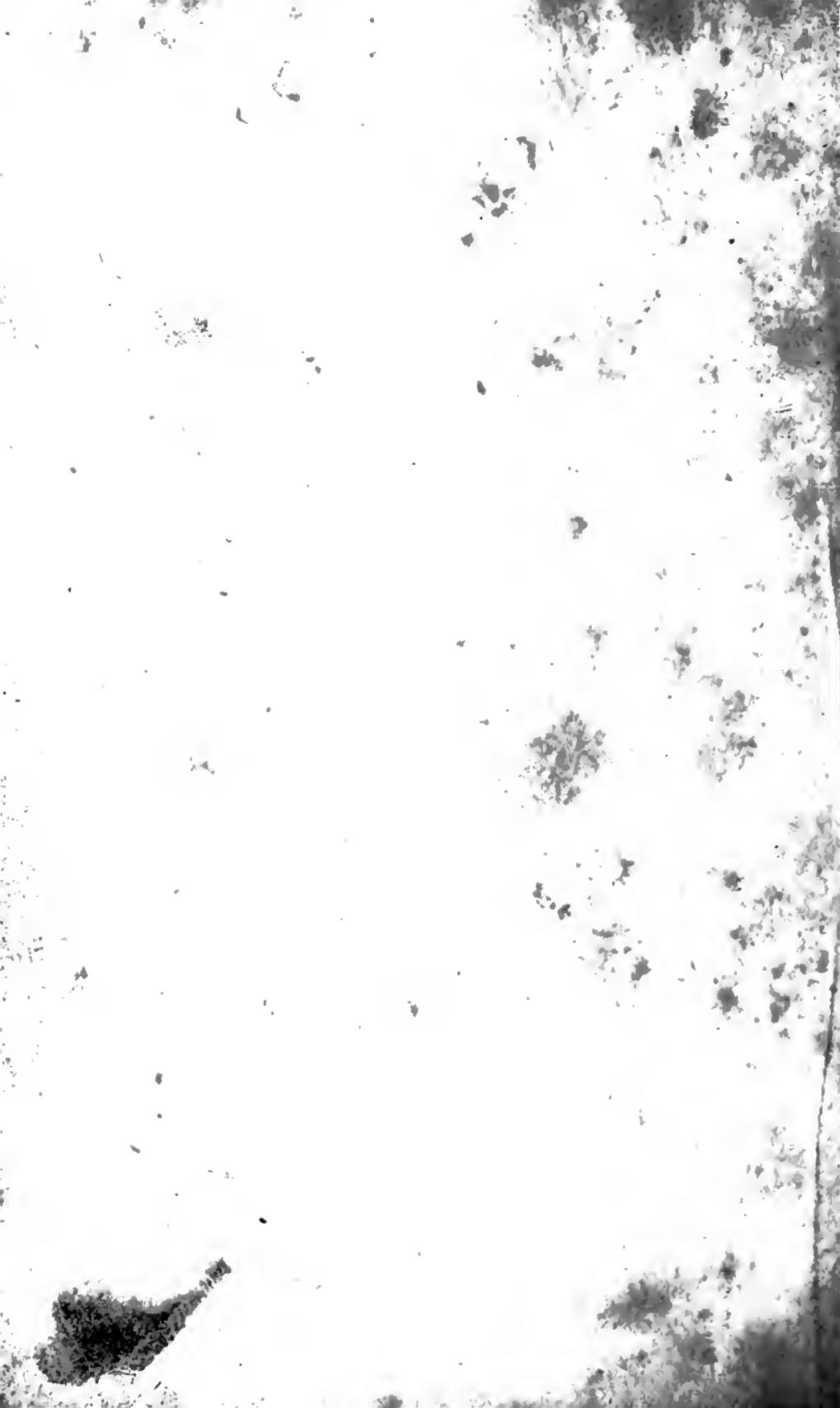
Henrietta. Christmas



















"See, these are my jewels."

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My Mother's Jewel;

OR,

HAPPY IN LIFE, HAPPY IN DEATH.

BY

JANE A. EAMES.

WITH ENGRAVINGS, EXECUTED BY JOCELYN,
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My Mother's Jewel.

CHAPTER I.

"Oh, mother!" exclaimed Mary Benson, as she rushed into her mother's room one afternoon, on her return from school; "how I wish all history was as full of pretty stories as this part I have been learning to-day; I should not then call it a dry study." The gentle mother looked earnestly on the flushed face of her daughter, and said: "Well, tell me the story that has so charmed you." The eager child gladly complied, and related the following beautiful narrative. I give it in her own simple style:

"Oh, mother, you must know, that in the early ages of Rome, the people were very rich, and the Roman ladies decked themselves with many jewels. One lady, whose pride it was to appear always in the most costly style, was at one time showing to a

friend her elegant ornaments : ‘See,’ said she, ‘are not these jewels magnificent ? But why do I see you so plain ? Have you no ornaments ?’ The lady smiled softly, and said : ‘Wait a minute, and I will show you jewels far more costly than yours ;’ and then, mother, the proud lady smiled in scorn, for she was not willing to believe any one had more beautiful jewels than she owned ; but, just then, in bounded two noble-looking boys, fresh and healthy, with their ruddy faces upturned to meet their mother’s kiss of welcome. Eagerly did that mother clasp them in her arms, and, as she looked fondly, first on one and then on the other, she said, with a glad smile lighting up her face : ‘See, these are my jewels.’ Now, mother, had she not more reason to be proud of her ornaments, than that senseless woman had to rejoice in her finery ?”

“Certainly, my dear.”

“Are all children their mother’s jewels ?”

“If they are amiable and affectionate, kind, gentle, and obedient, they are. God has given to parents their little ones to train them up for Heaven ; and if properly trained, they will be as jewels in the crown of their Saviour.”

While this little dialogue had been going on, a thoughtful, gentle-looking, fair-haired child had come from the low stool, on which she had been sitting by the side of her baby brother, and nestling close to her mother's side, she said : "It is a pretty story, mother ; and I should like to learn many such. Mother, is it in the power of a little girl like me to be a jewel to you ?"

The mother kissed the innocent child, and said : "All children, if they are good and obedient, if they love and obey their God, and try to do as He wishes them to, are the greatest of earthly blessings to their parents. Such, my children, may you ever be to me."

A new light seemed to beam forth from Anna's eyes, a new life to spring up in her breast ; and she turned thoughtfully away, repeating to herself the magic words, "My mother's jewel."

Mrs. Benson was the wife of a merchant, in the small but flourishing town of S. She was a woman of much energy of character, tempered with mildness and gentleness. Religion shone in her every act ; was exemplified in all her deportment. As a wife, she was a true help-meet to her husband ; as a

mother, she was, in every sense of the word, faithful to her duties. A consistent member of the Church of Christ, she early trained her children in the paths she had so long walked in ; and from the first dawn of intelligence in their minds, they were taught their duties to their God, their obligations to His Church. Baptized into that Church, they were daily shown how their baptismal vows must be performed ; and that it was no idle promise their parents had made for them.

So far, their labors had been blessed. Mary was now twelve years old, and was a child of uncommon intellectual promise. Her understanding was remarkably good and vigorous, her imagination vivid, her disposition warm, energetic, and impulsive. Not always could she be depended on, as her inclination ever led her to follow her first impulse. Over her, her parents kept an earnest and fond watch. Daily was she shown the necessity of having her feelings and disposition brought under the calm sway of religious principles. Daily was she taught the necessity of bringing all her thoughts and affections and will in strict subjection to her Saviour.

The gentle Anna was far different from her sister in many respects. Her warm feelings were kept a little in check by her excessive timidity ; but her love for her parents was unbounded. Pensive and quiet in her disposition, she was not formed to combat with the world, and her principal failing was to be too easily guided by those she loved, because she often felt too weak to resist their wishes.

It seemed to an idle observer an easy thing to train two such naturally well-disposed children in the paths of religion ; but the parents constantly found that it called forth all their exertions, all their patience and love ; and that the injunction to give "line upon line, and precept upon precept," was especially necessary in their case.

When Anna had arrived at the age of ten years, to the great delight of the children, a little brother was added to their circle. Excessive was the affection of these two girls toward the innocent babe, and all their play hours were passed in their mother's room ; and it was at any time a sufficient reward to them to be permitted to hold in their arms this tiny brother.

"Oh, mother ! are you never to give a name to

our baby ?" was the frequent exclamation of Mary. "Nelly King's little sister is no older than our brother, and yet she is named."

"Would you like to have our babe called James, my dear girls ?"

"Oh, yes, mother !" they both said ; "because that is dear father's name."

"Then, mother," said Mary, "may we begin now to call him James ?"

"Not yet, dear. Do you not know that the Church bestows the name upon her children ? When the baby has received a Christian name, through its baptism, then you may begin to call him by it."

"But, mother, it will be so long before he is baptized, won't it ?"

"Why, what makes you think so ?"

"Because Nelly King's mother says she never has her children baptized till they are old enough to look like something."

"Oh, my daughter, can you suppose a mother, anxious to bring her child into Christ's holy Church, would wait for so foolish a reason as that ? We do not take our children to baptism to attract the no-

tice and admiration of our fellow-creatures, but from an earnest desire to have them brought into the fold of the redeemed ones."

"Mother," said Anna, "will our little baby, young as he is, be able to be born again?"

"This is what the Church teaches, my child; and I trust that, in answer to our prayers, and in accordance with the covenant made by God with us, the Holy Spirit will be given to him, and that he will be born again; and that if proper means are used to keep him in the vows we take upon us, he will never swerve from the true faith."

"Will he be baptized next Sunday, mother?"

"If I am strong enough to go out to church he will be; if not then, as soon after as possible."

"Oh, what dress shall you let him wear?" asked Mary: "Nelly King says, when her last baby sister was baptized, her mother sent to Boston and bought a dress for her that cost twenty-five dollars, and that the baby looked beautiful. Shall you have a new dress made on purpose for our baby?"

"Why, my daughter, you talk in a thoughtless manner this afternoon. Bring me your prayer-

book ; turn to the baptismal service, and read me the first question put to the sponsors, and their answer to it."

Mary read in a slow and distinct manner :—
“Dost thou, in the name of this child, renounce the devil, and all his works, the vain pomp and glory of the world, with all covetous desires of the same, and the sinful desires of the flesh ; so that thou wilt not follow nor be led by them ? I renounce them all, and, by God's help, will endeavor not to follow, nor be led by them ?”

“Now, then, daughter, do you not see that if I take my babe to baptism, thinking of its making a fine show and appearance, I am not renouncing the vain pomp and glory of the world ; and if, while that vow is on my lips, I am in very deed acting against it, what surety can I have that in after years I go not farther astray from the promises I make for my child, till he is of an age to take those vows upon himself ?”

Mary remained thoughtful a long time, for her ; and, at last, looking up suddenly in her mother's face, she said, “Ah ! now I see more clearly than I ever did, why you have always been so anxious

that we should be so plain in our dress ; for, mother, Nelly King says we are the plainest-looking children that go to our church."

" You seem very fond of quoting Nelly King's opinions and remarks, my child. I should be sorry to see you imitating her notions of dress and fashion ; and besides, too, you and Nelly both ought to know that you do not go to church to show your dress, or to display the latest fashion ; but, that while in church, your dress and deportment should be such as to attract the least attention."

" Then, mother, when should we dress ? You never let us go to parties ; you never allow us to have gay dresses, as other children have."

" I trust you, my children, will never have a taste for such dresses."

" Well, I am sure, mother, I should like to have pretty dresses and bonnets, such as many of the girls that go to our school wear."

" What, my daughter, if your parents did not approve of it ?"

" But I wish you did approve of it, mother ; for, is there any harm in dressing gayly and prettily ?"

" Is there any good in it, my child ?"

"No, mother, I don't know as there is ; but it makes people notice us more."

"Does my little girl care to attract attention rather than to win the love of her friends?"

Mary hung her head and was silent. After a short pause, Mrs. Benson said : "Mary, tell me, candidly, do you think your parents would act the part of true sponsors in your baptism, if they fostered in you a love of display ?"

"No, mother, I do not ; but then you know one hates to be so odd, so different from others. It makes me feel ashamed to see myself plainer than other girls ; and besides, mother, to tell you the truth all about it, I feel a strange thing tugging at my heart at such times, that makes me unhappy, and then I say bitter things—things I am so sorry for afterwards."

"Well, do you not know what that feeling is ? Oh, daughter, it is something you should guard against now, while you are young, ere it grow and flourish in your heart like a rank weed. It is envy, my child ; and you know you pray in the Litany to be delivered "from envy, hatred and malice, and all uncharitableness ;" and you well know, if you

use this prayer without having the words come from the heart as well as the lips, you are a hypocrite before your Maker."

Mary was awed by her mother's solemn tones, and throwing her arms around her, she said, with a true burst of feeling: "Oh, mother! how I wish I could always be a good child; then I should never have an unhappy feeling in my heart."

"Oh, yes," chimed in Anna; "would it not be delightful for you and me so to behave that we should always be our mother's jewels?"

The mother gave each of her dear children a warm kiss, and said, in earnest tones: "God grant, my dear ones, that you may indeed be jewels, not only to me, but precious ones, also, in the crown of your Redeemer."

When the little girls retired to their room for the night, their mother accompanied them; and then, as had always been her custom, knelt with them while they offered their evening prayers. With solemn tones they uttered some of the beautiful Collects of the Church, ending by using the Lord's Prayer. This oblation of their youthful hearts ended, the mother gave them her good-night kiss,

and left them to their slumbers. Before retiring herself, she went again to her children's room to see if all was right. There they lay, those two lovely girls, in peaceful slumber ; Mary, with her long black hair shading her face, Anna, with her fair locks turned from her forehead, showing the whole outline of her pure and gentle countenance. Bright dreams seemed to animate her, for suddenly a smile lit up her whole face, her hand sought that of her sister, and in earnest tones, she exclaimed : "Oh, Mary ! to be our mother's jewels !" A smile of ineffable love and hope played over the mother's face ; and softly stooping and kissing each dear forehead, she murmured, "God's blessing be upon my darling girls."

From the hour of the birth of each child, Mrs. Benson had given them up to God ; her earnest desire being to train them up for His Church below, and for that kingdom above, where only the pure and the happy find admission. With the gentle Anna, this seemed an easy task ; her very gentleness and amiability led her so much to depend on those she loved, that as long as she remained under the influence of her parents, good must result ; but

the mother often trembled as she looked on the loving child, and sighed to think how little she was fitted to struggle with the wickedness of the world. And yet, so well had the seeds of good been sown in her heart, she could but hope and believe, that she would manfully fight against all that might oppose her in what she believed to be her duty.

With Mary, the mother had trials of a different kind. Of a rash, impulsive, yet generous nature, she was prone to yield too much to the promptings of her own will, and that will often led her away from the wishes of her parents. Still those parents hoped and prayed ; they fainted not, but labored, by adding "line upon line, and precept upon precept," to instil such principles into the young girl's heart, that she should daily see more plainly what was right, and be able more and more to shun those things that were wrong. Never was either of these children allowed, for one moment, to indulge, without reproof, in any passion or affection unworthy the true Christian. When Mary was inclined to be peevish, fretful or exacting, she was shown at once that such feelings were not to be indulged ; and she was taught at those times to lift up her

heart to the hearer of prayer, for strength to resist the world, the flesh, and the devil. Anna, too, with all her gentleness, had her faults. Unhesitatingly, she believed what was said to her, if it bore the semblance of truth ; and her amiability led her to adopt as her own the wishes and conduct of her friends ; but she was made to see that even here she would often be in danger ; and that it was highly necessary for her to inquire strictly whether this or that was right, not whether it would please such and such a person.

Mild, yet energetic ; prompt in seeing the faults of their children, and eager in correcting those faults, Mr. and Mrs. Benson were well-adapted to train up the children God had given them. Early were they brought into the Saviour's fold, and daily did the parents strive that the privileges and blessings imparted to them in baptism, should not be lost by their neglect, but should be cherished and strengthened by the means of grace provided for them in the Church.

CHAPTER II.

THE Day of Rest dawned upon that little household. All were quiet and orderly. The children early sat down to their lessons, that they might be prepared for the catechetical instruction of their Rector ; a cloud seemed occasionally to cross Mary's face, and her eyes at times wandered from her book, and rested upon her father, as though she wanted to ask something, but dared not. At last he caught one of those inquiring glances, and suddenly looking up, said : " Well, my daughter, what is it ? "

A blush mantled the cheek and brow of the young girl ; but she came instantly forward, and putting her hand in his, said : " Please, father, need I go to church this morning ? May I not stay with the baby ? "

" Baby has its nurse to take care of it ; you are not needed, Mary."

" But, father," she whispered, " I do not want to go this morning."

"Not want to go to church, dear ; pray, why not ?"

Oh, father, do not laugh at me ; do not be angry with me ; but old Mr. Jones is going to preach this morning, and he is so dull I cannot bear—"

"Stop, my daughter," interrupted her father, more grieved than angry at the cause she assigned for wishing to stay away from the house of God ; "stop, my daughter ; do you know what you are saying ? Are you, a little girl, to set yourself up in judgment against a minister, whom Christ has appointed to teach you the way of life ? Remember what our Lord says of those He sends abroad to do His work : "He that heareth you; heareth me ; and he that despiseth you, despiseth me." How can you be so thoughtless as to speak as you did in relation to one of Christ's own servants."

Mary hung her head, and was silent a few minutes, then suddenly raising her eyes, and throwing back the hair from her forehead, she said : "I cannot help it, father ; but I don't like him, and I don't want to hear him ; and I am sure it will do me no good to go to church with such feelings, so I may as well stay at home."

Graver and graver grew the father's face, as Mary rattled out this flippant speech. Looking firmly at her, he said : "Mary, what do you go to church for? do you know?"

"Yes, sir; to hear the minister tell us about good things."

"And is that all, my child?"

"No, father," she answered, in a low tone.

"For what else, then?"

"You always tell us we must join in the services."

"Well, what are those services? Turn to your prayer-book, and read a part of the exhortation. What does it tell you we "ought chiefly to do," besides confessing our sins, "when we assemble and meet together?"

Mary hesitated.

"Read, my child."

She then read : 'to render thanks for the great benefits we have received at His hands; to set forth His most worthy praise; to hear His most holy word, and to ask those things which are requisite and necessary, as well for the body as the soul.'

"There, father, you see attention is to be paid to the preaching."

"Does it really say so, daughter?"

"Yes, sir; do you not remember?—‘to hear His most holy word.’"

"But, my child, are there no other ways of hearing ‘the most holy word,’ than through preaching? Suppose, as is often the case, there is no sermon, is God’s ‘holy word’ taken from us?"

"No, father; there are the Psalms and the Lessons. Oh, father, I am ready to confess that I spoke thoughtlessly."

"As you often do, my child."

"But, father, may we not have our likes and our dislikes in relation to the minister who is to preach? May we not have our favorites?"

"You should be careful how you allow such things to hinder you from receiving God’s holy word, by whomsoever it may be delivered; and remember, my darling, you may always get some good from every minister, who faithfully preaches that Word, even though he do it with not so much eloquence as you, in your youthful fancy, might wish. Our principal object in attending church is to

worship God. That should be never lost sight of. You have been taught to engage in the services of the Church, and you well know that you can join in those services, and always ought to, whether they are offered up by a friend or by a stranger."

"But, father, why do you never allow us to go anywhere but to church? Many girls, who go to our school, and to our church, too, go sometimes to other places of worship. There is Nelly King, father, (mother says I am always quoting her,) she often goes on Sunday wherever she has a mind to. Her mother says it does not make much difference where she goes, so long as she is kept from mischief and from play. Why may I not sometimes go with her?"

"My daughter, have you forgotten what I told you, but a moment since, was our object in going to church?"

"No, father, for you said it was to worship God; but other people worship Him, don't they, even though they do not use the services of our Church?"

"The question is not what others do, but what we should do ourselves. You have been accustomed, as I said before, to join in the services of

the Church. The Prayers, the Psalms, the Lessons, all are familiar to you ; and they come before you like sweet and remembered things. There is nothing to distract your attention from the worship due the Creator, from a sinful, erring creature. But if you go to places of worship, where you are not accustomed to attend, and especially where the forms of celebrating divine service (for the denominations of Christians around us have their forms, although they ridicule us for so strictly adhering to ours) are so entirely new to you, do you not see that your attention would be diverted, and that instead of worshiping God with your whole heart, your mind would be occupied with the novel ceremonies around you ?”

“But, father, other people are devotional, are they not ? I am sure I often hear the school girls say, ‘Oh, you Church folks are all wrapped up in forms ; you do not pray as we do.’ ”

“I told you, before, my dear Mary, we are not to be guided by what others say. You are to do what your conscience, aided by God’s Word, prompts you to do. If, after fully trying the services of the Church, you find they are the best in-

centives to devotion ; that they are what your intellect and your heart need to remind you of God's claims upon you ; then, my love, are you not tampering with sacred things, to have a desire to go where other, and to you, novel forms, are practised, even though those engaged in them, think them more direct means of grace than our own spiritual liturgy ?”

Mary did not answer, but sat a long time thoughtful and grave.

“ Do you not see it so, daughter ?” at length asked Mr. Benson.

“ Yes, father, I think I do now ; but sometimes the services of the Church do seem a little formal to me.”

“ And whose fault is that, my dear ? When you sit down to the reading of God's word, do you not sometimes feel less interested in it than at other times ?”

“ Yes, father.”

“ Is God's holy word changing or the same then ? Is the Bible at fault, because you sometimes read it with wandering attention ?”

“ No, father.”

"Whose, then, is the fault, my dear?"

"Oh, father! you always make me feel that I am in the wrong when I talk with you."

"Well, dear, I am glad to see you are thus made ready to confess when you are in an error. If, then, you acknowledge the Bible is not at fault, because you sometimes read it with wandering thoughts, where is the blame to lie when the services of our holy religion seem tame and dull to you?"

"Oh, father, at the same door, I suppose; mine must be the blame, mine all the fault. But how can I help this? I cannot think always just as I ought to; can you, father?"

"We cannot always help wrong thoughts coming into our hearts, even at the most holy hours, my child; but we can help them staying there."

"How, father?"

"How, my daughter? Why, by bringing them back at once, when we find they are straying away from right things, to the subjects which ought to claim our attention. Another thing, Mary. The more we look about us in church, the more our attention is distracted. If you allow yourself even once to turn your head, (and you know, my daughter,

you sometimes practise that bad habit,) you will continually see something or other to call off your attention, and that not for a moment, but for as long a period as you choose to indulge in the associations excited by the passing glance. Let me give you an instance. A few Sundays since you came home apparently dissatisfied with everything around you. You acknowledged you knew very little about the lessons, and nothing at all about the sermon ; and why ? Because, in one of your wandering glances around the church, you caught sight of your school-fellow, Mary Grant, with a new bonnet and dress on. Now is this not true, my child ?”

Mary blushed, hung her head, but said nothing.

Her father continued : “ Doubtless, you began at once to compare Mary’s dress with your own, and then to wish you had parents as indulgent to you in this respect, as her father and mother are to her. Thus you grew discontented with your own condition, and allowed yourself to lose sight of the blessings that surround you, in indulging in the covetous desires of the world, which your sponsors promised to renounce for you. Now is not this a

true story, Mary ? Speak, my dear, and tell me candidly."

" Yes, father," said Mary, looking up, with her beautiful eyes shining with tears ; " yes, father, it is the truth ; but oh ! father, I could not help it."

" Stop, my daughter ; do not say you could not help it ; for you know you could if you had tried. If, on your first entrance into church, your whole attention had been fixed upon the services in which you were to engage, you would have had no opportunity to have seen what you did see ; and if, after you had seen any object to distract your attention, you had had your mind, your thoughts, under good discipline, after a second's wandering, they would have returned to the proper subject before you. Mary," continued he, solemnly, " I do not want to pry into your heart ; but, my love, when you kneel before God, on your entrance into church, what is the subject of your prayers ?"

Mary was silent.

" You pray, do you not ? It cannot be that my little daughter allows herself to assume the attitude of prayer while her thoughts are upon far different things. Speak, my child."

Mary sobbed, but did not answer.

Mr. Benson went up to his daughter, and putting his arms around her, said : "Do I ask too much, my child, when I thus try to look into your inmost heart, and to know your holiest secrets ?"

Still Mary spoke not. Mr. Benson sat silently by her, while she checked the fast-falling tears. "Oh, father, my own dear father," she at length sobbed out ; "I know you will think me very wicked ; but oh, I do sometimes kneel when my heart is far away from God ; but, indeed, indeed, I do try, as soon as I find it out, to bring back my thoughts ; and then I pray earnestly to God for His forgiveness. Oh, father, do you think He will forgive me ?"

"I believe He will, my darling ; but one thing you must remember, that after you have sinned many times in this respect, and as many times repented, and asked God to forgive you, you must not go on believing you may continually indulge the same fault, trusting that your repentance and prayers will cause you to be forgiven. Remember, my dear, what you heard read this morning : 'Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound ? God for-

bid!' And you must bear in mind, too, that true repentance is not only sorrow for sin, but giving up that sin which has led us away from God. When you perceive your thoughts beginning to wander, set yourself diligently to work to keep them directly on the subject before you. Be not discouraged if the first attempt fail, or the second, or the third; and do not console yourself by saying, 'I cannot help it; I am not responsible for my thoughts;' but keep on trying, till you know what it is to have your thoughts under your own control. This is to know and practise true self-discipline."

"Well, father, if you please, I should like to ask you one question; but, dear father, do not think I am impertinent. Are you never troubled with your thoughts wandering away from sacred things, when you are in church?"

"I try not to be so troubled, my daughter; but there is no one who is not conscious that, at times, his feelings, his meditations, are not entirely under his full control. But I do not say this as an apology for the thing I am speaking about. We shall never profit by the food our mother church sets before us, till we learn to bring all our dispositions, our

thoughts and feelings, under such control, that while in sacred places we shall think only of sacred things. As I told you before, the sin does not so much lie in the thoughts coming, as in our indulging them when they have come upon us. But one thing more, my daughter, before we leave this subject. I want to say a few words to you in relation to attending other places of worship than the Church. What do you mean by praying in the Litany, to be delivered 'from all heresy and schism ? '

"Surely, dear father, I never thought much about it ; but I suppose it means following all the new-fangled notions that spring up now-a-days, or in turning Mahometan or Mormon, or some such thing. Indeed I never paid much attention to it, as I did not suppose it applied to me."

"And so, my daughter, you have allowed yourself to respond to a prayer, about which you know nothing ? Do you expect the prayers of the Church thus to do you good ? If I sometimes allowed you to leave your church and go elsewhere, do you know that while I was asking God to deliver me 'from heresy and schism,' I should have

been putting my own child in danger of the very thing I was praying against."

Mary opened wide her eyes, but said nothing.

"Does what I say sound strangely to you, dear? Well, listen to me a moment, and I will explain it to you as simply as I can. You know we believe our Saviour established the Church, and that He commissioned the Apostles, and they their successors, to go into 'the world to preach the Gospel to every creature.' You remember, my dear, our blessed Saviour's last promise: 'Lo! I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world.' To whom does this promise belong? To any one, who, in his own blind zeal, takes upon himself the name of a teacher of Christ's most holy faith? No! but to such as have been duly commissioned, by receiving authority from those to whom Christ Himself gave power to impart that authority. Well, in process of time, men trusting in their own misguided wisdom, chose to leave the ways of the Church, and to walk in paths of their own forming. They take some separate passages of Scripture as their standard of belief, and build themselves up a society of human organization, and call it a church.

A few others believe differently, and they form another 'church ;' and so on, till each individual thinks he has a right to believe and act as he sees fit. But do you not see, my daughter, that their uniting together into societies, and calling them 'churches,' does not make them so. Many of these societies, too, inculcate doctrines our Church teaches us to believe not sanctioned by Divine revelation ; thus they embrace heresy as well as schism, and think it no sin, although the Apostles, in their different epistles, denounce divisions and heresies as much as any other sin men are prone to commit. So you see, my dear, in going away even but once from the church, you would, for the time being, be guilty of the same sin."

"But, father, do not all these people think they are right ?"

"Does thinking make them so, my love ? Because people choose to set up their own wisdom in opposition to the wisdom of God, and say it makes no difference how they believe, so long as they are sincere, does that clear them in the eyes of Him, who has given light sufficient in His holy Word to guide all aright ? I cannot expect to make this

subject very clear to you now, Mary ; but when you are older, I hope you will see that the claims of the Church are so binding upon you, that you will never, even for one moment, indulge an inclination to leave it. And now, as I see I have a little more time, I want to talk still farther with you on the subject of attending strictly to the services while you are in church ; for, in spite of all that has been said to you, you will occasionally glance around you, and in so doing you put yourself in the way of temptation, by running the risk of seeing something or somebody that will excite in you thoughts unsuitable to the day and the place."

" Why, dear father, some think it no harm at all to look about in church ; for I heard Mrs. Clapp say, the other day, she did so much like her new pew, because she could see so well ; and when mother said, ' I thought your other pew was quite near the pulpit,' she interrupted her quickly, by saying : ' Oh ! I could always see the minister well enough ; it is the people I mean.' And when mother said, with her usual gentleness : ' Is it necessary to see the people in church ?' she said, so impatiently : ' La ! it is no use ever to say anything

to you on such subjects ; for you think we go to church just to worship, and not at all to see who are there ! ”

“ And your mother was right, dear. I do not think Mrs. Clapp is an evil-disposed person ; but she has been brought up in that gossiping sort of way, that she is never satisfied without seeing everything that is going on, let her be where she will.”

“ Well, I guess there are a great many, then, brought up in the same way ; for I know, by what I hear the girls say at school, that some of them see everybody in church, and know what they have on, and whether it is new or old ; and there is Betsy Wheaton, she told me yesterday, that her mother said there wasn’t any good in going to meeting, unless she could see the folks.”

“ Meeting ! my dear ! ”

“ Yes, sir. You know Betsey’s parents don’t go to church ; Betsey herself says it is meeting.”

“ Well, my daughter, I wish it more and more impressed upon your mind, that you go to church, not to see nor to be seen, but to render the worship and service due your Creator and Redeemer. Oh,

my dear child, it makes me sick at heart to think of the erroneous notions many entertain in relation to these things ! When I hear persons tell about this and that they have seen in church, I want to take them by the hand, and ask them if they realize what they go to church for ? What a solemn mockery it seems to see persons rise from their knees, after having, as we suppose, secretly asked God's blessing on themselves, and the services in which they are to be engaged, and then begin as deliberately to look about them, as though they were in some place of amusement, instead of being in the Lord's holy temple, and to whisper one to another, as though they came to talk with man, not with God !"

" And then, dear father," said Anna, who had entered the room a little while before, " how many more people are sick on Sundays than on week days."

" Yes, my dear ; and it is surprising how quickly such persons get well. A man who 'cannot,' as he says, ' hold up his head' on Sunday, is at his business early on Monday morning. A woman, who cannot sit up on the Lord's-day, much less go to

church, is brisk and active about her house, so soon as the working-day morning dawns upon her. Then how often people stay at home from church on account of the weather. Is it so on one of the working days of the week ? The same rain which keeps a merchant a prisoner in the house on Sunday, has by no means the power of detaining him from his business during the secular days. And I have even known ladies, who dared not 'set their foot out of doors,' (to use their own words,) on Sunday, on account of a little rain or snow, brave a much more violent storm to go to some place of amusement."

"But, father," asked Mary, "is it right to expose our health in going out in storms to church ?"

"It is not right to expose our health carelessly for anything, daughter ; for health is one of the talents God has given us : but is there not as much peril in going out on business or pleasure, as in going to church ? If a friend tells me 'I dare not go out in a storm to church, on account of my health,' and yet I see that very man brave inclement weather when in the way of his business, what am I to think of his consistency ? If a person is too

delicate to go to church, he is too delicate to go anywhere else."

"But, father, some do not think it a duty to go to church. I heard Mrs. Baker say, the other day, it was a free-will offering."

"And is it not a duty to offer free-will offerings? Would God accept a service, if paid to Him from compulsion? No! my daughter; and I consider it an imperative duty for us, as often as the church opens her doors for Divine service, to be there, unless we are actually and positively detained by sickness, either of ourselves or our families. God, you know, has set apart one day in seven for His own immediate worship and service. Is it not, therefore, a duty, a moral obligation, to render Him up that day? If, in His wisdom, He orders that we should assemble ourselves together for public worship, what are we that we should gainsay or resist?"

"But, father, Mrs. Baker says persons can read and pray, and enjoy their minds at home on Sunday, just as well as though they went out; and that there are a great many good Christians who do not think it at all necessary to attend stately any

place of worship on Sundays, unless they have a mind to."

"But how came you so conversant with Mrs. Baker's sentiments on these subjects?"

"Why, you see, father, Mrs. Potter was giving her a little bit of talk the other day, because she was not more punctual in attending church, and I was in the room and heard it all."

"Well, my child, I can only say, that staying from church, or any outward means of grace, is rather a dangerous experiment to be tried, and for one I should be very unwilling to venture upon it. The best Christian people I have ever known have been those who were the strictest in performing their outward duties. Look at Mr. Hill, your favorite among our friends. Where is there a more consistent Christian, a better father, a more excellent and honorable business man, than he is? When do the duties of his family, the cares of his business, keep him from the house of God? Look at his wife, an exemplary mother, a very pattern of housekeepers, an industrious, frugal woman; is her seat ever vacant in church? Never, unless she is actually confined by sickness. Yet, does her house-

hold suffer ? Let all who know her answer. Are not their children jewels ?" and Mr. Benson smiled at the light which came into the two girls' eyes at the mention of the word "jewels."

"Well, dear father," Mary said, "you need not go from home for examples ; for are not you and mother the very dearest and best father and mother that ever children had ? and nobody goes to church more than you do."

"Thank you, my dear child, for the praise you so liberally bestow upon us ; I hope we shall ever be worthy of it. But the reason I have said so much about outward duties, is because many have erroneous ideas upon these subjects. They think if they properly attend to their own private duties, there is not so much necessity for their making sacrifices in the performance of outward duties ; as, for instance, constant attendance upon the services of the Church. Now I will give you an example, that you may readily understand what I mean : There is Mr. White, a worthy man, a good neighbor, an affectionate father, and, in the eyes of all, what is called a good Christian ; yet how often is he absent from church ? And when I say, ' You were

not at church yesterday, Mr. White,' his answer is 'no; I have not been well all the week, and I stayed at home to get recruited.' Now he is robbing the Lord of His time, of what is due to His service, that he may save his own time. Why does he not take a week-day to recruit, as he calls it? Simply because he 'does not feel he can spare the time.' Not spare a day for his own rest, when he does not scruple to take that consecrated to the Lord!"

"But his family, father," said Anna, "does he not have to work for them?"

"Yes, dear, I grant all that; but is the Scripture promise of none effect to him: 'Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you?' Do you think our merciful God, our kind and gracious Benefactor, would suffer a person to want for any of the necessaries of this life, when he saw him anxious, zealous after spiritual blessings and comforts?"

"But you acknowledged, father, that you thought Mr. White a good man."

"So I do, my daughter; but a man may be good, and yet have mistaken ideas on many subjects.

What I call right, another may call wrong. What I consider wrong, another may think quite justifiable. Mr. White thinks he must do all he can for the support of his family; there certainly he is right; but when higher duties come in to claim his attention, he should not give those up. If it is necessary for him to take a day occasionally 'to recruit,' let him take one in the week-time, and have his Sunday for himself and his God; and my word for it, nay, a high and holy word for it, neither that man, nor the interests of his family, will suffer by so doing. As I said before, only let Christians manifest as much zeal and diligence in going to church, as they do in their affairs of business and pleasure, and there will be much more of true religion shown forth to the world than there now is. Hear how worldly people reproach us: 'You talk of the vanity of earthly things, of the shortness of time, of the necessity of being prepared for another world, and yet you give up but a few hours in the week to such things, while all the remainder of your time you are as much devoted to your business, your pleasure, as we are.' Oh! my children, I fear many, 'who profess and call themselves Christians,'

will be found at the last to have been wanting in due attention to religious duties. But see, it is almost time to go to church. Are you both quite ready?"

Anna went up stairs to get her prayer-book, and while she was gone Mary said : "Talk to me more, father, if you please."

"What! are you not tired of so long a talk? Well, I will ask you one more question. When you are preparing yourself for church, and thinking whether you are neat and clean, do you examine your heart well to see if that is pure and clean in the eyes of God? When you are desirous to appear well before others, does not an anxious prayer go up to God, that you may be pure and holy in His eyes, who seeth not as man seeth?"

"Indeed, father," she said solemnly, "I do think of it; and I do pray, that as I am daily washed for outward cleanliness, so I may have my soul made clean and white in the blood of Christ."

Her father kissed her, and said : "God in Heaven bless my daughter, and guide and keep her in the way of all truth!"

Mary came home from church with a pleased and

happy expression on her face, and going up to her father, she said : "Thank you, dear father, for not granting my request this morning. How nicely Mr. Jones preached ! I never liked him so well before ; and I tried to pay earnest attention to all he said, because I thought he would be pleased to see little girls, as well as older people, act as though they liked to hear him."

"Was that your only motive, my dear ?"

"No, father ; for I felt that I had done the good old man injustice in calling him dull, and I wanted to make up for it in my own mind, by getting all the good I could."

"My children, I was surprised at one thing this morning ; I did not see you kneel."

"Not kneel, father !" said Mary, in a surprised tone.

Anna lifted her eyes inquiringly to her father's face, but said nothing.

"What do you call kneeling, my little girls ?"

"Kneeling ? why, kneeling is getting down upon the knees, to be sure," said Mary. "I thought everybody knew that."

"It seems, then, that neither of you know it, or if you do, you do not practise what you know."

"Why, how strangely you talk, dear father. Do we not always kneel? You have always told us that we must."

"Am I the only one that tells you this? Does not your prayer-book say, that in your prayers you are to be 'devoutly kneeling;' and is sitting down on your seat, and bending your knees on a cricket, 'devoutly kneeling?' Is this the way you have been taught to kneel?"

The little girls blushed, but made no answer. At last Anna said, timidly: "A good many people kneel as we did, father."

"Does that make it right, because others practise it? You are to kneel upon the floor, or upon a stool or cushion, and not to sit upon the seat with your knees on something else; that is not kneeling but sitting; and is anything but the reverential attitude that is becoming to us sinners, when we address Him 'who dwelleth between the cherubims.' And another thing, as you are never, during singing, to turn your back to the altar, so you should not turn away from it in prayer. An humble,

reverent posture, assists much, perhaps far more than you have any idea of, towards keeping your attention in devotion. When you heartily engage in the prayers and praises of the Church ; when you learn to keep your minds fixed on what is before you, then you will profit by these services, which otherwise would seem cold, formal, and uninteresting to you.”

CHAPTER III.

In the afternoon of this day, the little babe was presented for holy Baptism. The parents, with joyful tears, gave their new-born infant to God ; and He received him, and made him one of His own children. Mary and Anna listened with solemn earnestness, as the minister gave the exhortation to the sponsors, in regard to the future training of the child, that he might “lead the rest of his life according to this beginning.” No sooner were they home from church, than Mary began, with much interest, to talk with her mother about the services : “Why, mother,” said she, “do not Anna and I

know the Creed, the Lord's Prayer, and the Ten Commandments?"

"I hope so, dear."

"Well, mother, you know that we know the Catechism all by heart; for how many times you have heard us say it."

"Well, my dear child, I have said nothing about your being ignorant of the Catechism, or any of those things which, as a Christian child, you ought to know."

"Then, mother, why are we not confirmed? for were we not baptized the same way that little James was?"

"Certainly, my daughter; but what of that?"

"Why, mother, Mr. Potter told you that you were 'to take care that this child be brought to the Bishop, to be confirmed by him, so soon as he can say the Creed, the Lord's Prayer, and the Ten Commandments, and is sufficiently instructed in the other parts of the Church Catechism set forth for that purpose.' These are the very words, mother; for I read them over and over again, that I might be sure I got them right. Now, mother, Anna and I do know all these things; why, then, are we not

confirmed ? Oh, mother," said the little girl, pressing to her mother's side, " perhaps you do not think we are good enough to be confirmed ; but, indeed, I have often felt, when I have seen you kneel at the chancel, and take of the sacrament of the Body and Blood of Jesus, that I should be a better girl, if I, too, could partake of the Lord's Supper. Say, mother, do you not think it would be good for Anna and me to be confirmed, and afterwards to go with you and father to the Lord's Table ? Say, mother?" and the tears came into the child's earnest eyes, while Anna sat in her usual thoughtful quietness, with her head resting against her mother's knee.

Mrs. Benson's eyes filled with tears—such tears as a parent only can know; and looking down on her loved ones, she said : "God knows, my children, how earnestly I long and pray to see you brought to enjoy the full privileges of the Church, which Christ purchased with His own blood. But think, dear ones, how sad it would make me feel if, after you had taken upon yourselves, in Confirmation, the vows your sponsors took for you, you should lead lives inconsistent with your holy profession."

"But, mother," said Anna, "we are already Christians now, are we not?"

"You were, indeed, in holy baptism made 'members of Christ, children of God, and inheritors of the kingdom of Heaven.' All the promises of God's covenant were visibly signed and sealed on His part. But, remember, that on your part, also, 'a solemn vow, promise, and profession,' were made by your sponsors. This engagement you will take upon yourselves when you are confirmed; and without a sincere endeavor to fulfil it, all the blessings secured to you in baptism, will be forfeited and lost. It is, indeed, a glorious privilege to be admitted into God's family, if we strive to live answerably to our high calling. I hope and trust, my dear children, that you 'steadfastly purpose so to do, by God's help,' and to be Christians, not in name only, but in deed and in truth. I will think earnestly on this subject, and do you think of it, too; and I will talk with your father and with our good Rector, and I will soon tell you what we think about it."

Then tenderly kissing the girls, she left them, and going to her husband's library, she told him the

conversation which had just taken place. "And now, my husband, what shall we do?" she asked. "Do you think our girls are too young to be confirmed? Anna is thoughtful and grave beyond her years; but Mary, our enthusiastic and impulsive Mary, can we depend upon her stability?"

"My dearest, see that you do not exact too much from these children. Though Christian children, they are children still; and we must expect them to have the dispositions of children. They will be, they must often, of necessity, be light, careless and playful; but are these things inconsistent with their profession? Only think of older Christians; how few of us live just as we should live; and shall we expect more from these little ones than we ourselves manifest? There, I think, is the great difficulty in the way of having children early take their baptismal vows upon themselves. Their parents expect them to show the graces of perfect Christian character, whereas they are but very babes in Christ. I have no hesitation in saying, (and you know it is a subject which has often engrossed my thoughts,) that if parents and sponsors only do their duty, there is no danger in bring-

ing children early into full communion with the church of Christ. Do we not always have to prepare ourselves for the Lord's Supper? Are we not called upon to examine ourselves before we presume to eat of that bread and drink of that cup, and can we not see that our children perform the same duty?"

"But, my husband, think upon the disgrace it brings upon God's holy church for her members to go astray; and why should I suppose my children would escape what sometimes befalls those more advanced in Christian graces than they are?"

"But, are you to shut out your children from the sacraments of the church, for fear they may not always receive them aright? Oh! my dear wife, that is a sad doctrine for a good churchwoman, like you, to advance. I am satisfied there would be far more piety in the world than there is, if children now, as in the early ages, rightly trained as Christians, were brought to partake of all the blessed privileges the church has prepared for them. The younger they are the easier they may be led; only lead them in the right path, watch over them well, that they stray not, and God's word for it, they will

not wander from Him. Do you mistrust His ability to keep His own?"

"Oh! not for a moment, His ability, His willingness; but I am afraid of our own sinfulness, that hinders us from using the means He has given us, for keeping us aright."

"I repeat, then, will you shut out yourself and your children from God's holy sacraments, because you are sinful and unworthy of them? Pray, if all were worthy, where would be the need of sacraments and ordinances, or more than all, of the blood of Christ itself? As long as we live, my love, I have no fear, with God's blessing upon us, for our children. Plant in their hearts the seeds of good things, and after we are gone from them, and they are left to their own guidance, these good seeds will spring up and bear fruit; or else you must say that the promises of God are of none effect, and the prayers of His church avail nothing: for, at our children's baptism, did we not pray that they might receive the fulness of His grace, and ever remain in the number of His faithful children; and did we not afterwards thank Him that it had pleased Him to regenerate these children with His

Holy Spirit? If we do not now believe that the Holy Spirit was given to them, is it not equivalent to saying that we prayed for something God had never promised us? No, Fanny; if you believe your children were regenerated in holy baptism, you must now also believe that the Holy Spirit will assist them in performing the vows we then made for them, provided, always, the means of grace be used which are furnished us in God's own church. Do you not see it so, dear?"

"Yes, it is quite plain to me; still, I must confess, I shudder at the thought, that my children should not live consistent, godly lives; for how much reproach is daily cast upon our church, because its members live not up to their holy vocation."

"But our children are already members of the Church, and in bringing them to Confirmation and the Lord's Supper, while we increase their responsibilities, we also increase the means of grace given to strengthen them in the divine life; for how can any one seriously and devoutly approach the Lord's Table, without deriving spiritual benefit from it? The very self-examination our children must pass

through each time, before partaking of that holy feast, will, of itself, tend much towards their growth in grace and increase in holiness ; and it must be my part and yours, my dear wife, to see that they come not to the Holy Sacrament without due preparation. I will see Mr. Potter soon, and will talk this matter over with him ; but I know enough of his sentiments to feel assured that it will give him much delight to see some of the lambs of his flock thus take upon themselves their baptismal vows. Oh ! my dear Fanny, how delightful would it be, if all the lambs of Christ's fold would thus early be brought to partake of all the privileges the church of Christ provides for her children ! Why is it that they are so long kept from these blessings ? Why, but because we have expected that they should be mature Christians in character, while they are babes in years ; and in doing so, we show that we exact more from them than we ourselves are able to give ; for where is the Christian, who, in thought, word and deed, is as he should be ?"

CHAPTER IV.

ONE day in the ensuing week, one of the ladies of the parish came to see Mrs. Benson, and after talking on various subjects, asked her if she knew that the Vestry had decided about refitting the church, painting it, and furnishing it with new carpets and cushions. "But," continued she, "my husband says the times are so hard, he does not see how it can be brought about. It will cost at least two hundred and fifty dollars; and where is all this money to come from? I am sure we cannot afford to give ten dollars; for our children, as they grow up, need so much money to carry them through the expenses of their education. Why, we have to give twenty dollars a-piece a quarter, for Carry and Mary to take music lessons; then there is their French, and their usual day-school besides."

"But," said Mrs. Benson, "I heard you say the other day, that neither Carry nor Mary showed much taste for music; why, then, be at the expense of a musical education?"

"Now, that is just what my husband says; but I tell him that it is now-a-days so fashionable for girls to play, I should be ashamed to have it said mine knew nothing of music."

"Well, my dear lady, suppose you should give up that idea, allow your children to stop taking music lessons, and appropriate that money this year to the wants of the Church. That sum, of itself, would be almost sufficient for what is needed."

"Well, now, if that is not just the queerest talking I ever heard! Give up my children's music lessons, and devote the money we have annually paid for them to the Church! Why, you must think we are made of gold!"

"But, just look at it in this light. You acknowledge your girls care nothing about music; nay, I have heard you say that their taking lessons was just like throwing away money. Now if you take that money, and give it to a just, reasonable, and charitable purpose, that, surely, is not throwing it away."

"Well, what good would it do? The church is just as good for worshiping in without all this money laid out upon it."

"My dear Mrs. Allen, how can you say so, you who are known to be so particular about having everything nice and clean? Does not your house regularly go through a renovating process once a year?"

"Why, yes, to be sure; but that is for neatness and comfort, and, I may add, a little for show."

"Well, then, do not our churches require to be kept neat and comfortable, and in one sense, even for show?"

"Now you are joking, Mrs. Benson."

"No, indeed, I am not; far from it. I say again, in one sense, it is for show; for ought we not to show to the world that we have as much regard 'for the house of God,' as for our own places of abode? What can worldly people think of us, when they see us spending hundreds every year upon our own comfort, and begrudging a little sum to keep God's holy temple in fit order for His worship?"

"Well, I must confess, you have given me a new light upon the subject; but I do not think I can give up the music lessons for all that; and I doubt, if I did, whether my husband would be willing to appropriate the money as you advise."

"But if he has each year to pay out this sum, it cannot so much matter to him how it goes, so long as he sees good effects resulting from it; and remember, you have already acknowledged that, as yet, it has seemed like throwing away money when it has gone for music lessons."

"Oh, please, don't tell me that again," said Mrs. Allen, laughing; "I already repent using the expression, for I venture to say, you will never forget it. I see very plainly that I cannot get off with giving less than fifty dollars for fixing up the church. Will that satisfy you?"

"My dear Mrs. Allen, I trust you will be guided in this by a better motive than satisfying any one. Remember what is read in our hearing at the offertory: 'God loveth a cheerful giver.'"

Mrs. Allen soon afterwards took her leave; but Mrs. Benson's conversation produced a good effect upon her. She saw at once, that even in what, in modern parlance, is called "hard times," every family indulged in some luxuries which might be dispensed with; and that if necessary to retrench, it should be in those luxuries; not, as it is too often the case, in stinting charitable contributions.

Mr. and Mrs. Benson had a long talk that evening, in relation to the subject discussed with Mrs. Allen. Mary and Anna were both present, and listened with much attention to the conversation. "You know, my dear," said Mrs. Benson, "we were intending this year to have a new carpet and chairs for our parlor. Now I think that, for two or three years to come, we can do quite well without them; so, if it pleases you, we can take that money, (it will be at least fifty dollars,) and give it next Sunday at the offertory."

"But, mother," asked Anna, "may we not give something ourselves? I have got a little money I have been saving in my money-box; I suppose I might give that;" and she glanced inquiringly at Mary.

"But how came you by that money? I thought you put on the plate each Sunday, all you had laid by during the week."

Anna blushed, and said, "Oh! mother, that has been a secret. I did not mean to tell it yet; but you know, when my uncle George was here a good while ago, he gave each of us a half-dollar. I thought it was too much for me to give it all at

once, so I laid it up for future use ;" and again she glanced at Mary.

"I hope my little Anna is not getting covetous," said Mr. Benson.

The tears filled Anna's gentle eyes, and she said, in a low tone : "Oh ! father ! I hope not. But I will tell you the secret, if Mary is willing." Mary nodded assent, and Anna went on : "You see, dear father, I once heard our dear minister say he wanted a book, (I have forgotten the name,) but that he did not feel as if he could afford it; so Mary and I agreed to save our half-dollar, and each week to lay by a cent from our offerings, to add to it till next Christmas, and then by that time, we thought, may be, we should have enough to buy the book for dear Mr. Potter. Was it wrong, father?" asked she, timidly lifting her eyes to her father's face.

"No, dear ; and I dare say your pastor will be much pleased with the gift ; but you must be careful how you diminish your offerings, for anything but the best and worthiest objects. Now do you feel willing to give up this long-cherished plan, and bestow the money for refitting the church ?"

The children were silent a few moments, and then

Mary said : "It would be very nice to make the present to Mr. Potter, because we all ought to do something for our minister ; still we would like to give something, too, for the church, shouldn't we, Anna?" Anna gave her cheerful assent, and Mary continued : "But how are we to get money, father ? We have no way of earning it, and it would be no self-denial for us to give that away which costs us nothing ; would it, father ?"

"Well, girls, listen to me," said Mrs. Benson, "and I will tell you how you may get the money, and practise self-denial, too. You know that each of you is to have a new dress this season, which will cost, I suppose, about two dollars. If you will do without the dresses, I will give you the money, and you may deposit it on the plate next Sunday. But I do not wish you should give your answers now. Think carefully and deliberately ; weigh well both sides of the question, and when you have decided, let me know."

Now this was no trifling thing to Mary, for she had always manifested considerable desire to dress, and appear well. Her parents had carefully guarded against everything that could foster her pride. Con-

stantly were her baptismal vows brought before her, to weaken this love of show. Both the girls were always dressed neatly and plainly, never being allowed to have gay or expensive clothes ; still Mary showed more taste for display than Anna. The gentle, unassuming little girl never, apparently, had one thought for herself, or if she did, the moment her mother expressed any different opinion, she was always willing at once to give up, for she would say within herself, " how can I be my mother's jewel without obeying her in everything ? "

With Mary it was far different. She, generally, had a long conflict with herself, before she could give up her own way to please another ; still, in all cases where obedience was required by her parents, obedience had always to be yielded. To this there was no alternative, and the children knew it. But in matters of opinion they were often allowed to think for themselves, that they might early learn self-dependence, and not expect to be always guided by another's judgment.

The next morning the children went early to their mother's room ; Mary's face was a little clouded, but Anna's wore its usual look of serenity. " Well,

“my darlings, now for the decision,” said Mrs. Benson.

Neither spoke.

“Mary, my love, you are the oldest; you may speak first,” said the mother, playfully tapping her daughter’s cheek.

“You will not be angry, mother, when I tell you?” said Mary, in a low tone.

“I can guess your decision, Mary, from that answer.”

Mary glanced quickly at her mother’s face, and as she saw its grave expression, she said again, “You are not angry with me, mother? You said you would not influence us in our decision.”

“I am not angry, Mary; but I feel grieved that all my instructions to my child have, thus far, seemed to be thrown away.”

“Oh! mother! do not say so,” said Mary, the tears springing to her eyes; “I will do anything to please you.”

“I wish you, my child, in this affair, as in every other, to be guided by higher motives, than a wish to please me or any one else.”

“Well, mother, I will tell you all about it; and

what a struggle I had. Last night, after I went to our room, I sat down and thought it all over candidly, at least I tried to ; and, mother, I came to the conclusion that I would have the dress.” Mary brought out this last rather reluctantly.

“ You do not seem to be well-satisfied with the decision yourself, my daughter.”

“ Well, mother, because I am afraid you and father will be displeased with me.”

“ Why, my child, we told you last night we should not influence your decision, and we shall abide by our promise. But one question, my daughter. Did you ask God’s assistance in your decision ?”

Mary hung her head, but said nothing.

“ Speak, Mary,” said Mrs. Benson, gently.

“ No, mother, I did not ; because I thought it was too little a thing to pray about.”

“ My child, I am surprised to hear you speak so. Is any matter which concerns us small in the sight of God, who attends to the most minute affairs of His creatures ? How do you know but this one thing, trifling as it seems to you, may color your whole future existence ? If you had given up your

own wishes at this time, self-denial hereafter would have become easier. Now it will be more and more difficult."

"But, mother, is there any need of us children giving anything? Will not the church be done just the same without our aid? Whereas there is need of our being dressed clean and neat, that others may see we have a proper regard for our appearance."

"This is plausible reasoning, Mary; but is it not necessary, too, that others may see that you have a proper regard for the neat and tidy appearance of God's holy temple?"

"But, mother, nobody will know whether we give anything or not."

"God knows, my daughter; and your own conscience will either blame or approve your decision; and is it nothing to have the approbation of one's own heart? I think, my dear, you have reasoned like a silly girl; like one who had already made up her mind as to what she should do, before she began to debate the question. But I shall say no more on this subject. The dress shall be bought; but remember, it is to be perfectly neat and plain, such

an one as befits a Christian child, whose parents have promised that she should renounce ‘the vain pomp and glory of the world.’ And bear in mind, after this, never to take one step, however unimportant it seems to you, without asking God’s blessing upon you. And now, Anna, what is your decision ?”

“I do not wish the dress, mother,” said the little girl, softly.

“Why, my child ?”

“I thought you would prefer that we should give away the money.”

“Is that your only motive, dear ?”

“Oh ! mother,” said Anna, pressing close to her side, and looking up with her earnest, wistful eyes ; “oh ! mother ! if you knew how anxious I feel to please you and my dear father in everything ! Do you remember the story of the jewels ? Well, mother, I am trying to be a jewel to you ; and any time I want to do anything, I say, can I be my mother’s jewel if I do this ?”

“Well, my love, that is all very well ; but, after all, you should be guided by a still higher motive. You should ask your heart in everything : ‘Will

this be pleasing to God? Will this be walking in the footsteps of my Redeemer? Will this be in accordance with my baptismal vows?" If to all these questions you can answer 'yes,' then you may know it will be pleasing to your father and mother. And now, my daughter, I will ask you the same question I asked Mary: Did you ask God's assistance in your decision?"

"Mother, I did," said the little girl, firmly, but meekly.

"Then, my child, you have acted rightly; but, I repeat, you are to do all these things, not from a desire of my approbation, but from an earnest wish to do what is right in the sight of God."

Nothing farther was said on the subject; but the next Sunday, Mr. and Mrs. Benson deposited their fifty dollars on the plate, Anna her two dollars, while Mary had her usual penny savings.

"Mother," asked Mary, on her return home, "why are you so particular about our always giving as offerings on Sunday, what we have to give?"

"Because, my dear, that is the channel the Church has marked out, through which our gifts into the Lord's treasury are to pass."

"Well, but mother, why do you not belong to societies, as other ladies do ? and why do you not let us join ? and why — "

"One question at a time, daughter, if you please, and then I can answer you more readily. If you want to know why I do not join the hundred and one societies of the present day, or why I do not permit you to belong to them, I can give you my reasons in a few words. What does St. Paul tell us to do in the first Epistle to the Corinthians, sixteenth chapter, and second verse ?"

Mary opened her Bible, found the place, and read : "Upon the first day of the week, let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come."

"Well, dear, it is upon that principle we found our plan of Sunday offerings. If we are conscientious in laying aside each week what we think we can give away, in proportion as God hath blessed us, and if we regularly give that at the Offertory each Sunday, we should have nothing to bestow in any other way. All that we have to give, is to be given in that way ; and not a little to this society,

and a little to that one, which are of man's invention, but we are to give it all to the Church; and from the store she thus collects, she gives out what she thinks best for such objects as come properly under the head of the charities of the Church."

"But, mother, suppose I want to give something directly for missions?"

"Well, daughter, you very well know that each one who deposits any sum on the plate, may direct where that sum is to go; and those who are appointed to take charge of the offerings, will see that it goes where it is directed to be sent. In this way all your acts of benevolence and charity go through the proper channel, the alms given at the Offertory. If you do not wish to direct where your gifts shall go, then, you know, that certain proportions of the offerings are, each year, set apart for different objects: for missions, both at home and abroad; for parish purposes; for all objects, in short, to which our hearts and our purses should ever be open. As for the numerous societies of the present day, they are, as I told you before, of human origin, and are to be treated as such. To many they stand in the place of the Church of the living God;

and to them is devoted much of the time and strength and means, which should be given up entirely to the Church. For instance, if you are a member of the Church, where is the need of belonging to a missionary society ? It is one duty of the Church to send the Gospel into all the world. It is, therefore, so to speak, a missionary society of itself ; and into her treasury you should pay all that you have to give. I have other objections to the societies of the present day ; none other, however, which it is necessary for you to know. It is sufficient now for you to see, that in giving to them you divert your money from the proper channel, the alms and oblations of the Church. Is it not plain to you, my child?"

" Yes, mother ; and I thank you for giving me such good ideas on the subject."

CHAPTER V.

SEVERAL weeks passed on. The solemn season of Lent approached; that season so touching to every pious heart; and Mr. and Mrs. Benson devoted themselves and their household more than ever to religious things. Self-examination, meditation and prayer filled up many of their hours. The lusts of the flesh were subdued by proper abstinence; the affections and dispositions were brought still more strictly into subjection to the Divine will. Mary and Anna were always accustomed to attend prayers at church before school each morning, and before tea in the afternoon; but during Lent, Mr. Potter delivered a lecture each Wednesday and Friday morning. This somewhat interfered with their school hours, but Mr. and Mrs. Benson hesitated not a moment as to the course they should pursue. "Better," they said, "that the children should be behindhand with their studies, than be negligent in their attendance upon the means of grace." The girls, therefore, on those mornings,

were late at school, but they made up for their absence by extra diligence; so they were able to keep up with their classes. Their play hours were a little abridged, that they might have more time to spend with their mother, who now conversed with them more than ever on sacred subjects. Mrs. Benson's quick eye soon saw that something was amiss with Mary. She seemed dissatisfied with herself, and no longer went about with her usual buoyancy. Her face, generally so bright and animated, now wore a look of uneasiness and depression. It was quite evident to all that something troubled her, but her parents said nothing to her on the subject, leaving it to the workings of her own heart. The dress had been bought and made before Lent commenced, as during that season Mrs. Benson never had anything of the kind going on, for she wished to keep her own and her children's minds at that time as free as possible from those little petty cares and occupations. But Mary, for the first time, manifested no pleasure at all in the new dress, and once or twice was seen to shudder when it was brought out for her to wear. The two girls were no longer dressed alike, which seemed to trouble

her, though no allusion was made to that at home.

At last one evening, when Mrs. Benson went to give them her good-night kiss, the troubled girl threw her arms around her mother's neck, and sobbing, as though her heart would break, she said : "Oh, mother, dear mother, do forgive me, and love me again!"

"My child, what do you mean ?" asked the astonished mother. "Have I ever ceased to love you ?"

"Oh, mother, I have fancied everybody looked coldly upon me ; but my own heart is so heavy, I suppose that is the reason I thought so."

"And why is your heart heavy, daughter ?"

"Oh, mother, about that foolish dress !"

A smile like a sunbeam played over the mother's face, as Mary uttered, in vehement tones, the words, "that foolish dress !"

"Mother, I have never taken any pleasure in it ; for something has been tugging at my heart ever since it was bought, and now I feel to hate it. Yes, mother, as much as I desired it, I now hate it ! Oh ! what would I give, if I had never had it ! Do you not think I might sell it to some girl of my size, and give away the money ?"

"No, dear, you made your decision ; and you must abide by it."

"Well, mother, can you tell me some way in which I can earn the money ?"

"You are a little girl to earn two dollars, Mary."

"Oh, mother, smaller girls than I am, sometimes earn almost that sum in one week, working in a factory, you know, mother."

A smile lurked around the corners of Mrs. Benson's mouth ; but Mary was too eager about what she was saying to notice it. "Should you like to work in one, daughter ?" asked her mother.

The child looked quickly at her, to see if she was in earnest. "May I, mother ? oh ! may I ?" she asked eagerly.

"Should you be willing to, Mary ? and to have it said Mary Benson worked in a factory ?"

"Oh, mother, you should not say that to me, when you talk to me so much about not thinking of the approbation of others ; but thinking more of pleasing my Heavenly Father."

"I said it, my dear, to try you ; that I might know whether you have fully thought on the subject."

"Well, mother, so anxious do I feel to do what is right in this respect, and to get some money to make up for my foolishness about the dress, that I have made up my mind, and with praying over it, too, mother, that if you and father are willing, I would go with Lucy Shaw, and work till I earned the money."

"And who is Lucy Shaw?"

"Oh, mother, she is a nice little girl, that goes to our Sunday-School. Her parents are poor, and she works in a factory, and earns money to help her parents, and her brothers and her sisters; and, notwithstanding she works hard for her money, she always lays by some every week for offerings. Sometimes some of the girls tell her they think she ought not to give away her money, seeing she has to work for it; and that she should lay up something for what they call 'a rainy day.' Then she smiles so sweetly, and says, 'God gives me the strength to work, and I ought to give back to Him somewhat of the gifts He bestows upon me.' 'But when the rainy day comes, Lucy,' they repeat; and then, mother, you should see that smile again lighting up her pretty face, as she says, 'God will

provide for that day, too.' Has she not faith, mother?"

"Yes, my daughter; and it seems she has works, too, with her faith?"

"Mother, I know you would love Lucy, she is so good and so gentle; and you would not think any the less of her for working in a factory, would you, mother?"

"My child, if Lucy is, as you say, a good girl, no matter what her occupation is, she is to be respected for her sincerity and industry. And how much better is such a spirit, than if she was contented to share her parents' poverty, without trying to lessen it."

"Mother, there is one thing more I know you would like Lucy for;" and here a rosy blush stole over Mary's earnest face; "she is always so plain and so neat in her dress. Not one cent does she ever spend for anything for herself, unless it is positively necessary. And when some of the girls laugh at her for her plainness, the tears come into her gentle eyes, and her pale face grows sad; and I can see that it is hard for her to keep in and not answer them sharp; but she does keep in, mother;

and she tells them so quietly that she has no time nor money to spend on ornaments. ‘Besides,’ she says, ‘my parents promised that I should renounce the vain pomp and glory of the world; and I should not keep my baptismal vows, if I thought too much of my appearance.’ I heard Mary Grant say a bitter thing to her once when Lucy made her this answer, for she laughed, and said so scornfully, ‘only think of Lucy Shaw, poor as she is, talking about pomps and vanities, as though she knew what they meant!’ Wasn’t it cruel, mother?”

“ Yes, dear, it was, and I am glad it was not one of my girls that said it; but how did Lucy bear it?”

“ Oh, mother, I never loved her so much as I did then. Her face turned so white, and then so red, and the tears streamed down her cheeks; but she said, as gently as though she was not wounded in the least: ‘I know I am poor, but our blessed Saviour, though He was rich, became poor for our sakes; so there is no disgrace in being poor, for, in one sense at least, we are like Him. I am sure there would be as much of pomp and vanity to me in anything useless, however trifling it may seem to

you, as there would be in expensive dresses and costly ornaments to those who are richer.' When I heard her say that, mother, I thought she was a real heroine ; so firm, yet so gentle was she, even when such fault was found with her. I am sure I could not have borne it as well ; and I told her so afterwards. I saw she felt a little pleased that, amid so many who censured her, there was one to praise her ; but I saw, too, that she tried to put down the feeling ; for she said very meekly, 'I am a Christian child, Mary, and was made so at my baptism, and I must live as a Christian ought to ; and do you not remember the Bible tells us not to return evil for evil, or railing for railing ?' That answer sounded so just like her, that I kissed her, and told her I loved her better than any of the girls, my own dear sister, of course, excepted. And she seemed as much pleased as I was, for she kissed me again and again, and since that we have been better friends than ever. Now, isn't she a jewel, mother ?"

" Yes, and a bright one too. She is just such a girl as I like my children to associate with."

" Oh, mother, I am so glad to hear you say so ; for Anna and I both love her dearly, but some of

the girls turn up their noses at the idea of being seen with a factory girl!"

"What will they say, then, when you become one? Will they not turn away from you too?"

Mary's eyes filled with tears, the color mounted to her forehead, and for a moment she made no answer. At length she said, in a low but firm tone: "I have made up my mind to that, mother. I know it will come hard to me; but do you not remember what my father read this morning, that 'God will not suffer us to be tempted above what we are able to bear?' I trust He will make me bear all that."

"But, daughter, you know how quick you are to speak. Are you not afraid that sometimes you will forget, and say something for which you will be sorry afterwards?"

Mary's voice faltered, as she said, "But if I keep praying, mother, will not God give me more and more strength?"

Mrs. Benson kissed her daughter's cheek, and said, "God never forsakes those who trust in Him. He can give you strength, though you are but a little girl; but remember, my love, you must be very watchful."

"I will try to be so, my own dear mother. Do you think father will consent to my earning the money?"

"I think, my dear, your father will be very happy to see you anxious to make up for your past faults, but I am not sure he will consent for you to do it in the way you mention."

Mary's countenance fell, but she merely said, "Oh, mother, why not?"

"Why, my daughter, just think what you must sacrifice in carrying out this plan. Your school will have to be given up, your daily attendance upon the services of the Church suspended, your social intercourse with your family entirely taken from you; for all your time must be occupied with your labor."

"Oh, mother, how discouragingly you talk!"

"I talk as I feel, my daughter."

"Well, then, I don't see but I must give it up," said Mary, in a desponding tone; "and if I do, I see no way to get the money, and that dress will be more hateful to me than ever." And she burst into tears of mingled vexation and disappointment.

"But stop, dear, and let us see if there is no other way of getting the all-important money. Can you

not devise some other method by which you may obtain the desired sum?"

"No, mother," she answered, in a saddened tone; "I see no other way. I am too little, too ignorant, to do much. Oh, mother, if you could but know how anxious I feel to show my repentance for my foolish and hasty decision, you would feel more ready to help me." And tears of vexation shone in her eyes.

"Take care, daughter; keep close guard over yourself; do not let your warmth of feeling betray you into passion." The calm, low tones of Mrs. Benson's voice produced their usual effect upon Mary's impetuous feelings; and instantly wiping the tears from her eyes, she threw herself into her mother's arms, and said, "Forgive me, my own dear mother; forgive me all my crossness; but, oh, mother, if you knew how I had set my heart on this plan, you would see that I was not prepared to give it up."

"Well, my love, that shows the folly of setting your heart, as you call it, on one thing. Learn to think of everything in such a manner as will prepare you for disappointments. But again to this import-

ant subject. While you go to school, I know you can have but little time you can call your own; but perhaps, by extra diligence and perseverance, you may contrive to get a spare hour every day."

"But how, mother, and what shall I do in that hour? Oh, how I wish I was a grown-up woman! Then I could do such a number of things!"

"To be able to do much when you are older, you must daily acquire something useful while you are young, my daughter. Knowledge does not come all at once, but by slow degrees."

"But what shall I do, mother? You have not told me that yet."

"Well, then, I remember I heard your father say, he should be obliged to hire some one to copy papers for him, as he is at present so hurried in his business. Now, Mary, for a young girl, you write a very good hand; and if you will take pains to do it well, (for clearness and accuracy are absolutely necessary,) I think your father will let you do some of the copying."

Mary's eyes shone brightly, and she said, "Thank you, dear mother, for suggesting such a nice plan; but can I earn much that way?"

"Not a great deal, to be sure, my child; but still, by putting a little and a little together, you know, it will not take such a very great while to get the desired sum."

"How long do you think, mother?"

"Why, at least a month, I suppose."

"A month! That is a good while to look ahead to, mother."

"Well, so it is; but then you know it will soon pass after all; for how short a time does it seem to you, since your baby brother was given to you; and yet, you know he is nearly three months old. But to our plan. I cannot, for a moment, consent that you shall neglect any of your usual duties. Your studies at home must go on the same as ever, and even your play, for that neglected in its proper place, your health would suffer. Now, my daughter, you must not think me severe, when I tell you, that in carrying out this plan, you must expect no indulgence from me or any one else; you must get the time as you best can."

"Well, tell me how, dear mother; help me all you can, because you are so much wiser than a poor little girl like me."

" Well, then, daughter, you know you are not remarkably fond of early rising. Suppose, now, Bridget calls you an hour earlier than your usual time. After attending to your first duties, you will have a half-hour for the task set before you."

Mary's face clouded, and, in a manner far removed from her usual eagerness, she said : " Oh ! mother ! to give up my nice morning nap ! Could I not, instead, sit up an hour later each night ?"

" No, my dear ; that is impossible. You must consent, either to get up earlier, or to give up the plan altogether. All your other time is fully taken up. Just look at your usual routine : One hour at least in church, six in school, one at your meals, one at your sewing, and the remainder divided between study and play ; and where is there an opportunity for anything extra ?"

" Well, mother, I see it all ; but it is going to come very hard to me, I must confess."

" But, daughter, have you not learnt before this, that you cannot live without some self-denial ; and do you not know that each time you deny yourself, it will come easier and easier ? Remember, how difficult it was for you, at first, to apply to your

sewing ; and now you sometimes get so interested in it, as almost to forget when your hour is up."

" Well, mother, that is because you make the hour so pleasant by reading and talking to us ; and then, too, I can glance up from my work, and see dear Anna, and dear, dear little Jamie, near me ; and that makes me feel contented and happy. And so, now, I love my sewing hour very much, though at first I thought it was tedious."

" Well, Mary, other things will become as easy and pleasant to you as you practise them ; and I will venture to predict, that before you have tried your new plan of early rising one week, you will like it too well, ever to think of giving it up ? Think how lovely the early mornings are ! Do you not remember how much you were pleased with the lines your father read to you last Sunday, beginning with—

" Awake ! before some rosy-fingered morn ?"

" Oh yes, mother ! I liked them so well that I got the book afterwards, and learnt them by heart. May I say them to you ?" On her mother giving her consent, she recited a part of that beautiful

psalm for the Twelfth Sunday after Trinity, in the
“Introits :”

“ Awake ! before some rosy-fingered morn !
Lo ! every fragrant flower and leaf just born,
Each bird-tone, sweetly trilling 'mid the trees,
Each gently-whispering, cloud-compelling breeze ;
And (when the obedient sun is set,)
Each star in night's gemmed coronet—
All answer in full harmony,
Our light and life persist through God's decree.”

“ Well, my love, all these charms will be unfolded to you in practising early rising, and cultivating a love for nature, in all her various forms.”

“ Yes, mother ; but I shall be too busy doing my tasks to notice them.”

“ But you can feel the fresh, clear, morning air, and that is a luxury, you know, Mary.”

“ Well, mother, if you will promise to have patience with me, and not give up the first two or three times I fail, I will begin.”

“ Do I usually give up to difficulties, my child ?”

“ No, dearest mother ; and if I had but one quarter of your patience and gentleness, I should feel that I was pretty well stocked.”

Mrs. Benson smiled, and said : " Well, Mary, you do not often hear me quote myself; but if it will at all help you in your improvement, I will just tell you that I was once as impetuous and impatient as you sometimes are."

" Do not say 'sometimes,' dear mother, say 'always.' "

" No, my darling ; for I really believe that you are now sufficiently conscious of your faults to try to correct them. But, still, patience. Have you forgotten the old man you were laughing about the other day, who always had a proverb on his tongue's end ? I will repeat you one of his favorite sayings : ' Rome was not built in a day.' "

" Thank you, mother, for the information," said Mary, laughingly, " and for the encouragement ; and to-morrow I will begin ; and, mother," she added, looking up eagerly into her mother's face, as though a new thought had just struck her, " is it not a good time to begin this new act of self-denial, now during the season of Lent, when our Church teaches us to practise self-denial all we can ? To-morrow morning I will begin ;" and yet she could not help heaving a sigh, as she thought of the conflict before her.

Was it not, to her youthful heart, a type of the trials of after life, when every day, as it passed over her head, would teach her the necessity of striving against the lusts and desires of the flesh ? Dear child ! had she known more of the trials and troubles that beset every one's path through life, how light would have seemed her burden ! And yet, to her youthful strength, it was grievous to be borne.

CHAPTER VI.

THE next morning Mary was awakened at the appointed hour, from her deep sleep. Her first impulse was to close her eyes again, but she heard her mother's cheering voice, and that gave her new strength ; and repeating the lines—

“ Awake ! before some rosy-fingered morn !”

she sprang from her bed. Her duties were all well accomplished that morning ; and, with a light heart and a happy face, she joined the family at the usual hour. Anna now resolved she would begin to get up earlier ; and as she was never very strong, her

mother proposed she should spend more time in the open air.

"Why, mother, how idle that will make me," she said.

"Not so, my daughter, if in doing that, you get health and strength for future labors. You may work in your garden, and all you can raise, whether flowers or fruit, I will buy of you; and you may have the money for offerings."

"Oh, thank you; thank you, my own mother. I thought such a little girl as I could do nothing."

"Well, my love," said her father, "you see that even little girls can be useful."

"Yes, father; but dear little Jamie, who will play with him, if I work all the time in the garden?"

"Oh! you must not work all the time, daughter; don't you know the old couplet:

'All work and no play,
Makes Jack a dull boy.'

Dear baby must not be neglected. True, you can earn nothing by taking care of him; but then you will grow up in the use of kindly affections, one to-

wards another ; and that is a virtue of no small value in every family circle."

Thus these two girls were early taught to put forth efforts for the good of others. Mary continued her morning labors. Sometimes, it is true, she murmured a little at being called so early ; but her discontented feelings were soon dispelled, for she bore in mind that, when tempted to indulge in any unholy passions, she should flee at once to her Heavenly Father ; and thus strength was given her to overcome her temptations.

Anna, too, was very busy. The fresh morning air strengthened her ; and the hope of earning something for offerings each Sunday, animated her in her exertions. Still she was delicate ; and her mother often sighed as she looked at the almost transparent skin and slight frame of the sweet child, who grew thoughtful and sedate beyond her years. Yet amid all her thoughtfulness and gravity, there was a something about her that told every one she was a happy child. Her fair face was rarely flushed with anger, her smooth brow seldom ruffled by a passing frown. Her whole heart seemed given to her parents, her sister, and her little brother, and to

her duties toward her Heavenly Father and the Church of Christ. By her mother's side was her favorite station, while the gayer Mary loved to bound in and out of the room, now sitting a moment at her mother's feet, now snatching a kiss from the little pet, and then running into the garden, to dwell awhile among the fruits and flowers.

There was one feature in the domestic management of this family, which struck every one, and that was the perfect obedience Mr. and Mrs. Benson always exacted from their children. Yet it was neither harshness nor fear which caused the children to obey. Mild and gentle, Mrs. Benson was firm and uncompromising. Her word was always law, and from it there was no appeal. "Mother wishes it," was equal to a command. As soon as the children were old enough to show signs of a rebellious spirit, the lessons of submission were set before them. If children were always made in all things to submit to their parents, submission in after life to their Heavenly Father would not be so difficult to practise. This was one of Mrs. Benson's maxims, and on it she always acted. As soon as the children were capable of being reasoned with,

they were shown that such and such things were to be avoided, as inconsistent with their profession as Christian children. If Mary was inclined to be peevish, fretful, or exacting, she was made to go by herself, kneel down and say a little prayer her mother had composed for her, a prayer, asking God for strength to resist the unhappy feelings that were springing up in her heart. If the timid Anna shrank from any obstacle, her mother instilled into her mind the necessity of patience and perseverance. The parents felt that no slight responsibility rested upon them, in the bringing up of their children aright. The pleas so common in the mouths of many parents, touched no answering chord in their breasts. "Oh," says one, "my children are naturally so inclined to obstinacy, I never think of attempting to make them yield, for if I do, I am sure to have a scene, which ends in my having to yield, instead of making them do so." "Well," says another, "my principle is to let children do about as they please, when they are young, and when they get older, they will mind of their own accord." Not such were Mr. and Mrs. Benson's principles. Implicit obedience in everything was the law of

their household ; obedience to be given from the highest and holiest motives, as being in accordance with God's own commands. With the vows they had taken, the parents felt that it depended much on them, whether the Holy Spirit, which was given to their children in baptism, should abide with them, or leave them to the workings of their own sinful natures.

As in their own case, they saw that constant watchfulness was necessary to keep them from straying from the right paths, so in behalf of their children, they felt that such watchfulness was equally essential. "Why should we expect more consistency from our children, than we show ourselves ?" said Mrs. Benson, one day. "We are betrayed into unholy passions, we, with all the experience mature age has given us : why, then, should we be surprised, if our children occasionally show wrong tempers ? They are human, like ourselves. With the heart, naturally sinful, leading them astray from God, let us give them all the helps we can, in their onward way. The means of grace which the Church provides, bring us comfort ; they strengthen us in our daily struggles. Let,

then, our children, too, be brought fully under their influence."

"So I see I have converted you to my doctrine," said Mr. Benson, with a smile. "The other day you seemed to think it was dangerous to bring our girls thus early to the Holy Communion. If, as you objected, their schoolmates should sometimes bring against them the charge of inconsistency, then, I repeat what I before said, would not the same unholy affections, condemned in them, be condemned in older Christians; and should we expect children to have more stability, more consistency, than their superiors in age? They may be Christians, but they will, they must be, children. Let us watch over them all we can, and strive to lead them by example, and by precept, to overcome their sinful and corrupt affections, and daily 'proceed in all virtue and godliness of living.' "

"Have you spoken yet to Mr. Potter in relation to having the girls confirmed?"

"Yes, I have had a long talk with him. He is decidedly of our opinion, that children should be brought to Confirmation and the Holy Communion so soon as they are able thoroughly to understand

'what a solemn vow, promise, and profession,' were made for them at their baptism. Nay, he has so much faith in the sacraments of the Church, that he fully believes they are able, with God's grace, to keep in the right way all those who duly receive them. 'For,' as he says, 'look at what is required of a person coming to the Communion. Will a man of unholy thoughts, of an ungodly life, dare to present himself at that holy table? Will an unforgiving man, a slanderer, a back-biter, dare come when he hears the exhortation: 'Ye who do truly and earnestly repent you of your sins, and are in love and charity with your neighbors, and intend to lead a new life, following the commandments of God, and walking from henceforth in his holy ways, draw near with faith, and take this holy sacrament to your comfort, and make your humble confession to Almighty God.' And now, how do you think the girls feel about their Confirmation?"

"Oh, they are quite anxious it should take place. I believe the responsibility of bearing the Christian name is so strongly impressed upon them, that they feel very eager to do what is right. Mary, with all her impulse, is a conscientious child, and has a great

reverence for sacred things. Anna is so exceedingly anxious to please us in all things, that I am only afraid she will be too much actuated by that motive ; but, my husband, I am not giving way to a mother's partiality, when I say, that child is indeed a jewel. How gentle, how kind, how affectionate she is ! How careful not to wound the feelings of others ! With what love does she watch over that darling brother ! Oh ! I thank God, for the blessings He has given us in our children. All I ask is that they may be trained up in His service."

" Well, my dear, I believe every one will give you credit for being anxious for that ; for never, surely, was a mother less ambitious, less eager for the applause of the world, for herself or for her children. When I see so many parents, and Christian parents, too, apparently as desirous for their children's position in the world, as though they had not promised to renounce its 'vain pomp and glory,' I am amazed at their taking so low a view of their responsibilities. Oh ! far better that our children should be the humblest saints in God's Church, than that they should occupy the proudest, highest stations in this life !"

CHAPTER VII.

MR. POTTER now commenced his weekly examination of the candidates for Confirmation, and very faithful was he in this part of his ministerial duties. If any of his flock lightly confirmed and ratified the vows made for them in baptism, not upon him could the blame be laid. Over Mary and Anna Benson he was particularly watchful. They were the very youngest of the candidates; and they were, besides, peculiarly dear to him. On their heads he had poured the waters of Holy Baptism. They had grown up, side by side, with his own children; and in intimate intercourse with them. Mary and Anna dearly loved their Pastor. To them he was indeed a spiritual father; and they could unfold their thoughts and feelings to him as easily as to their own father and mother. From their earliest infancy Mr. Potter had known and watched them. Closely he questioned them in relation to their fitness for Confirmation and the Lord's Supper; and, after strict examination, he was ready

to present them to his Bishop, at the time of his next visitation.

Long and earnest were the conversations Mr. and Mrs. Benson had with their children, previous to this solemn rite being administered to them. Mary's gay spirit seemed quite tamed down, and Anna was more thoughtful and grave than ever.

I cannot, of course, in the limits of this work, note the particulars of these conversations. Suffice it to say, they were everything the children needed for instruction, admonition, and encouragement. I shall, therefore, only specify such as brought into play prominent features in their character and disposition.

Mary came home from school one morning, sad and silent. She walked, instead of running, as usual, into her mother's arms ; and, without saying a word, sat down beside the baby's couch. Mrs. Benson immediately saw that something was amiss. The child seemed struggling against the tears, which ever and anon trembled on her dark lashes, and after a few minutes she got up, and went into her own room. Then her mother heard her sob and cry, as though her tender heart was breaking.

In a little while she seemed to become more composed, and soon after returned once more to her mother's room. Traces of tears were on her cheeks, but there was an expression of firm resolution on her face, as though she had triumphed in some struggle. For a moment she looked timidly into her mother's eyes, and then falling on a low stool beside her, she hid her face in her lap: "Oh, mother," she said, while the tears ran down her cheeks, "oh, mother, so wicked as I have been? Do you think I can be forgiven?"

"You must tell me first, my daughter, what you have done."

"Oh, mother, I fear you will despise me when I tell you."

"My child, if you think such will be my feelings, what, then, do you imagine will be the light in which you are viewed by a higher Being?"

Mary's sobs now came thicker: "Oh, mother," she said, "do not be too hard upon me."

"Would you have your mother keep back any part of the truth from her child?"

"No, oh no! but forgive me my quickness, and I will tell you all. The girls at school have found

out that we are to be confirmed, for you see, Mr. Potter has told of it, in order, as he says, to encourage other children to think of doing the same. Well, Mary Bates began, at recess, to ridicule us, because, she said, we were going to make ourselves objects of curiosity and attention, by being confirmed so much younger than children generally are; and then she said, in such a harsh tone, 'I tell you what it is, you will have to walk straight when you are Christians, for we shall be ready to pick flaws in you, and to examine everything you do and say;' and then, mother, you should have heard Anna, when, in her quiet way, she said to Mary, 'why, we are all Christians now, are we not, that is, all those who have been baptized?' Mary stared at her for a moment, and then burst out laughing, and looking down on Anna, said, 'why, what a perfect little quiz you are!' Anna looked as though she did not understand what she meant, but still she said nothing; and, somehow, mother, the girls are all less inclined to tease Anna, who is so quiet, than me, who am so impulsive."

"But what did you say, my daughter?"

"Oh, mother, for once I said nothing, for I re-

membered the lesson father read this morning, not to return ‘evil for evil, or railing for railing;’ but oh! I cannot tell you what I felt. You know how hard it is for me to bear ridicule, how glad I am always to meet the approbation of all around me, and then, mother, to be told, that instead of doing what was right, as I thought, I was going to expose myself to the ridicule of my companions, it was quite too much! my heart swelled up within me, and it seemed as if I should choke. Oh, mother, for a moment I hated the very idea of being a Christian; don’t look so shocked, dearest mother, it was but a moment I had such bad thoughts, for I struggled and struggled against them, till I put them down. And all the rest of the time, till school was done, I thought about the subject again and again, but I could not feel just right, till I had gone by myself and prayed; and now, mother, I feel as though I do not care about what anybody says, if I can only do what is right in the eyes of my Heavenly Father, and of my earthly parents.”

“ Well, my daughter, I am glad you have come to so wise a decision. The remarks of our fellow-creatures are never, for one moment, to be minded,

when they stand between us and our duties. Ever ask yourself, 'how will God look upon any action,' and not 'what will such an one think.' And now go to the garden, dear, for your face is pale and your eyes heavy. Send Anna to me, for I want to talk with her."

Anna came, with her usual promptitude, and was soon seated by her mother's side.

"Well, dear, so the girls have been talking to you against Confirmation, have they?"

"Yes, mother."

"Well, what effect did it produce on you?"

"Why, mother," said Anna, while her fair cheek flushed, "to tell you all about it, I was sorry to hear Mary Bates say what she did, not only because it called up naughty feelings within me, but because I know that some of the girls have been thinking of being Confirmed; but now they say, that if every thing they do has got to be searched into, they would rather remain as they are. Mother, the girls do not seem to understand, that it is just as necessary they should behave well now, as though they had been Confirmed, and that is what I told them; but Mary Bates only laughed the more at it."

"Did you feel hard against Mary, daughter?"

Again Anna's cheek flushed, as she said, "Yes, mother, I did, but I was determined not to show it."

"But, my dear, it is wrong to have angry feelings, even though we do not show them."

"I know it is, mother, and I tried hard not to have them, and after a little while they went away. Mother," said Anna, after a moment's pause, "I heard one of the girls say something, to-day, that sounded queer, though I do not think she meant I should hear."

"What was it, dear?"

"Emma Reed said to Mary Grant, 'did you ever see such a little Moses as that Anna Benson? I would not be so meek and quiet as she is for all the world, for they say such children never live long.' Am I going to die, mother?"

A pang shot across the mother's heart—for how often had she felt, as she gazed upon the fair face of this sweet child, that she looked more fit for Heaven than for earth. Her lip quivered, as she said, "Why do you think you would be more likely to die than your sister?"

"I don't know, mother; only all the girls, after

what Emma Reed said, looked so kind of pitiful towards me. I am not sick, mother."

" You do not seem to be; and if a mother could have her way, she would always wish to keep her children with her; but our ways, you know, are not as God's ways. It would be very hard for me to give up either of my darlings; yet I would fain hope, that if Christ should call them, I should be willing to submit to His most righteous will."

Anna said nothing for a moment, and then lifting her large eyes to her mother's face, she said, " Mother, if Christ died for me, and if I am a good child, your jewel, you know, mother," and a bright smile flitted across her face, " need I be afraid to die ?"

" No, my love, for then I hope you would be with Him in Paradise."

" Smaller children than I die; don't they, mother? Dear little Jamie," said she, tenderly kissing the baby, " I hope he won't die soon; but oh, mother, is it not pleasant to believe, that if we live together happy here, we shall be happy in Heaven? Mother, do you think I shall know the baby there?"

" Why, my child, that is a doctrine not exactly

settled. Some say we shall know our friends in the other world, and others say we shall not ; and that our happiness will be so complete, we shall not miss them."

" Well, mother, I am glad I can say, that 'I believe in the resurrection of the body,' for then I know we shall all rise again ; and if we love our Saviour very dearly, we shall be so happy to be with Him, we shall hardly know any difference, if our friends are not with us. But oh, mother," she continued, throwing her arms affectionately around her mother's neck, " I know I should like you to be with me, dear, dear mother;" and the sweet child laid her head upon her mother's shoulder, and gazed with earnest eyes into her face. " How glad I am that I have got a dear, good mother."

Her mother kissed her, and the subject was dropped.

CHAPTER VIII.

At night Mary came home with a smiling face, and with the appearance of joy at something that had been said or done. Her mother noticed the self-complacent smile that occasionally played around her beautiful mouth ; but she said nothing on the subject, leaving it to Mary to tell her all whenever she saw fit. Mary was quite too full, however, to keep this matter, whatever it was, long to herself ; and soon after taking up her work, she said, looking into her mother's face, with a smile of conscious merit : "Mother, don't you think our teacher paid us a high compliment, this afternoon, before the whole school !"

"I hope," said Mrs.. Benson, quietly, "that you deserved the compliment, as you call it."

"Have you no curiosity to know what it is, mother ?"

"I have no wish to make my children vain, by hearing them repeat complimentary phrases," said Mrs. Benson, with a slight smile on her face.

"But, mother," said Mary, laughingly, "you were included in the compliment. Now, are you not curious?"

"No, for I cannot imagine what Miss Clarke could find to say about me in school, complimentary or uncomplimentary."

"Why, you see, mother, she was giving some of the girls a talk about not behaving properly at prayers this morning, and from that she spoke about being reverential and devout in church; and then, mother," continued Mary, while a flush of pleasure mounted to her forehead, "she said there was one thing she would say in favor of us strict Church people, (looking at Anna and me,) and that was, we always behaved well in the house of God. 'And in your case, my dear girls,' said she, 'I think a great deal is owing to the judicious training and perfect example of your excellent mother.' What do you think of that, mother?"

"Do you feel proud, mother?" asked Anna, who had just entered the room.

Mrs. Benson laughed at the artless manner of the child, and said: "I will answer your question by asking another: Did you feel proud, Anna?"

"Why, mother, I did not think much about it at first, for you see it came upon me suddenly, and I was puzzled to know what she meant by 'strict Church people.' Mrs. King says, 'real Church people are not pious, but are all taken up, like the Pharisees, with outward worship.' But if you and father belong to that class, then they must be good people."

"Thank you, my love, for putting such confidence in the goodness of your parents."

"Well, but mother," said Mary, rather impatiently, "you have not answered Anna's question yet."

"Oh, about feeling proud? Why should I feel proud, Mary?"

"Oh, perhaps not you, mother, for you are a grown-up woman; but do you not think if you were a little girl like us, you would have felt proud in being thus praised before the whole school, especially when such unpleasant remarks had been made in the morning, by one of the very girls, who, this afternoon, heard the praise bestowed upon us? Was it wrong to feel proud, mother?"

"Let us try to analyze your feelings, my dear

daughter. You have been taught, from your earliest childhood, to behave with propriety in church, because God is there, to hear the prayers and praises offered up to Him. Your conduct in church has been commended, you felt pleasure at this praise, but what kind of pleasure was it? You remember a rule I have often tried to enforce upon you, so to 'let your light shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in Heaven.' Now, when Miss Clarke praised you, if you had felt grateful to your Heavenly Father, that you, a little girl, by behaving properly in His house, had been enabled thus to glorify Him, because your example might be beneficial to others, why, that is a proper kind of pride, if pride it can be called."

Mary was silent, and Anna seemed eagerly to receive all her mother said.

"Did you feel so, my child?" asked the mother, after waiting awhile for her to speak.

Mary hung her head, and said, in a low tone, "no, mother."

"How then, daughter?"

No answer came. The child seemed struggling

with some hidden feeling. At last she said, "Oh, mother, how naughty you will think me, when I tell you all ; you will think me sinful all the time, never having a holy thought."

" Well, my love, will it make any difference in the eyes of your Heavenly Father, what I think of you ?"

" Oh, mother, that is the very thing which pains me ; not only that in your eyes I appear so naughty, but that my Saviour must be tired waiting to see me a good girl ?"

" You know he is long-suffering and forbearing, darling."

" Oh yes, mother ! else I should give up, for sometimes I think I never can be good. And now, mother, I will tell you all, for somehow, I can never rest easy, when anything is on my mind, till I have talked it all over with you. Well, when Miss Clarke first began to reprove the girls for inattention, I felt glad that her remarks did not apply to me, or Anna either ; and I am afraid I rather looked at the girls as though I felt a little superior to them, and as though I knew she did not mean to include me in what she said. But, mother, when she spoke

directly to us, then my heart swelled, just as it did this morning, only at that time it was with anger, but now with pride ; and I felt pleased, that after what Mary Bates had said, she should see that our conduct, in one respect at least, would bear the scrutiny she said would be given it. And I know my face flushed with pleasure, for it was hot and glowing, and I am sure the girls thought I felt proud, and, indeed, mother, I do think it was something to be proud of."

" But it seems, daughter, that according to your own avowal, it was not the right kind of pride, for you were exulting that you were thought better than your school-fellows. It was as though you said, ' stand by, I am holier than thou.' And I am sure, when you examine more closely into your heart, you will see a greater combination of feelings than you now have any idea of, and that you were indulging in those very passions, which, in the Litany, you pray to be delivered from, ' pride and envy, and vain glory.' " The tears flowed from Mary's eyes, and she said, " these are hard words to say to me, mother."

" Harder than the truth permits, dear daughter ? "

asked Mrs. Benson, gently. "The truth is almost always painful, but you know, my love, I pain you for your good."

"I know it, mother, and oh! if I am not good, it will not be your fault, nor the fault of the Church, mother, for how much does she do for her children!"

"I am glad to see you appreciate the kindness of both your mothers, my daughter—your earthly mother, and your spiritual mother, the Church. But, Anna dear, now that Mary has been candid, and told her feelings, are you not going to acknowledge yours?"

Anna raised her calm, pure face, to her mother's, and said, "I did feel glad we had done anything to deserve Miss Clarke's praises; and I was a little elated that the girls should hear what she said. I did not stop to think whether it was right or not. We cannot always think right, can we, mother?"

"No, my dear, but that is no excuse, though I will here say, both for your encouragement and for Mary's, that the sin lies not so much in the thought coming, as in allowing it to stay after it is come. How often I have told you, immediately when you feel a bad thought rising within you, you should

lift your heart to God, and pray to be delivered from the temptation. Had you both done so this afternoon, you would have come home better girls than you went. Your pride would have been humbled, and you would have felt sorry that your school-mates deserved the censure they got. Now, my children, go to your own room, and there examine your hearts; see if what I have said to you is not right, and then ask God to forgive you the sin."

"Well, mother, before we go away from you, I want to tell you something else—that is, if you are not tired of hearing our long stories."

"Oh! you are never tired of your children, are you, mother?" asked Anna, in a coaxing tone.

"Only when they are very naughty, and then I want to see them run quickly away, and come back good girls. But what is it, Mary?"

"Why, mother, I think the girls felt a little jealous of the praise Miss Clarke bestowed upon us, for as we were coming home from school, they began throwing out things against us, and at last Ann Low said, "she was surprised that a lady of your modest and gentle appearance (don't feel proud now,

mother !) should so far forget female delicacy, and that retiring disposition, so ornamental to our sex, (the very words, mother, for she uses the longest words of any girl I know,) as to read so loud in church as you do—and that you should make us so conspicuous as to have us read loud too. There, mother," said Mary, with a look of relief, "I have told you all."

Mrs. Benson remained for a few moments without speaking ; then seeing that Mary and Anna were both intently watching her countenance, she said, with her usual serenity of look and tone, "Now, my children, you must hear patiently and attentively what I have to say. You know I do not often speak of myself, for I do not wish to be set up as a standard for others, and I can only, at this time, vindicate myself by speaking in what you may consider a round about way. When you enter church and commence the services, of whom should you think the most, God or man ?"

The girls both answered immediately, and in a reverential tone, "God."

" But if, in uttering your responses, you are thinking what such and such an one will say of you,

whether you speak loud or low, are you not then thinking more of man than of God?"

"Yes, mother."

"Very well; now, our service is a responsive service, and each one in the congregation, man, woman and child, should bear their part in it. How much more elevating and inspiriting seem the services, when each one, in an audible and distinct tone, utters the responses! We, ourselves, feel more interested; and to others it seems anything but a dull and heartless ceremony. Can you not, then, conceive, that a female, however modest and retiring, in other respects, she may be, may respond in a loud tone of voice, and yet not lay aside her modesty and diffidence? Nay, do you not see that it shows anything but an humble spirit, if she says, 'I cannot speak out as loud as such an one, because I have not the confidence.' Is that humility which makes us constantly feel we are of such importance in the eyes of others, that our every word and look are noticed? Look at Miss Ellis for an example. Is she not strikingly humble and retiring in everything, yet who responds and sings in a louder tone than she does? And when I once heard some one

say to her, ‘how can you have the confidence to sing and read so loud in church?’ she modestly answered, ‘I never think anything about it.’ No! her whole soul is engaged in the services of the Church, and it never, for a moment, enters her head to imagine what others may be thinking of her. This is true humility, my daughters; and when you are engaged in worshiping God, what any of your fellow-mortals say or think of you, should not, for one moment, find a lodging in your breast. ——

I would not be uncharitable, or make unkind remarks about any one; but when I see a person afraid of letting her voice be heard in the services of the Church, I cannot call that humility and modesty, but vanity, and an overweening desire to be thought well of by others.”

“But, mother,” said Mary, “let me ask you one question: Does not the exhortation tell us, that we are to accompany the minister ‘with a pure heart and humble voice?’”

“Does ‘humble voice’ mean low and indistinct, Mary? I should think the word ‘humble’ there meant to refer to the tone of our voice; not proud or haughty, not such a tone as we use in speaking

to our fellow-men ; but subdued and reverential, as it should be when we address the Father of our Spirits and the Searcher of Hearts."

"Now, dear mother, let me, too, ask one question?" put in Anna. "Do you not think it more becoming for us little girls not to speak up loud in church, nor to do anything that would make us seem forward?"

"In whose eyes, my daughter?"

"Oh, mother," said Anna, blushing scarlet, "you see we still think of man, not of God."

"Now, children, let me, in my turn, ask a question : Suppose, when you are at school, some gentlemen come in to visit it ; they ask you questions, and, instead of answering in a distinct tone of voice, you mumble out something, no one knows what, are you not wanting in respect to your teacher, and to those who question you ? If you say you are frightened, and dare not speak up, then I say it is because you are vain and foolish, and are thinking more of yourself than of pleasing your teacher, and showing respect to the visitors of the school."

"But God looks at the heart, mother," said Mary ; "and He sees us, and knows what we are

going to say ; so it won't make any difference to Him, whether we speak out or not, when we are in church."

" Nay, my daughter, that is poor reasoning. God looks at the heart, you say. Why, then, do you kneel, when you may with equal reason say, that if your heart is right, your prayers will be acceptable, whether you kneel, stand, or sit !"

" But, mother," said Anna, " the Church commands us to kneel."

" Very true, dear, and why ? Because a devotional attitude goes very far towards promoting a devotional spirit. How much more humble do you feel, kneeling low before God, and confessing your sins, than if you stood proudly in His presence, as though you could not bend your knee even to Him, the great and glorious God. So an humble, reverential tone may go far towards promoting an humble, reverential spirit."

" Well, mother, may I tell Ann Low all this ?"

" No, dear, I would not ; but, suppose you make Humility the subject of your next composition."

" Oh, thank you, mother, for giving me so good

a theme ; and I will try to think over what you have told me. But, will not the girls think—" Mary stopped abruptly, colored, and then laughed. " That is what father would call a practical demonstration of the subject, that I should show I was thinking of others, even while talking of humility."

That night, when Mrs. Benson went to pay her usual visit to the children after they were in bed, Mary held her arms tightly round her mother's neck, while she said, in a low tone : " I think, mother, God has forgiven me." Anna whispered, " Oh, mother, I want to be good, and be a jewel to you. Have you forgotten the jewels, mother ? "

" Oh, no, dear ; and I daily pray that you both may be jewels to me, and jewels hereafter in the kingdom of our God ! And now, my darlings, a pleasant sleep to you ;" and, with a happy heart, she left her dear ones to the kind care of Him who slumbers not.

CHAPTER IX.

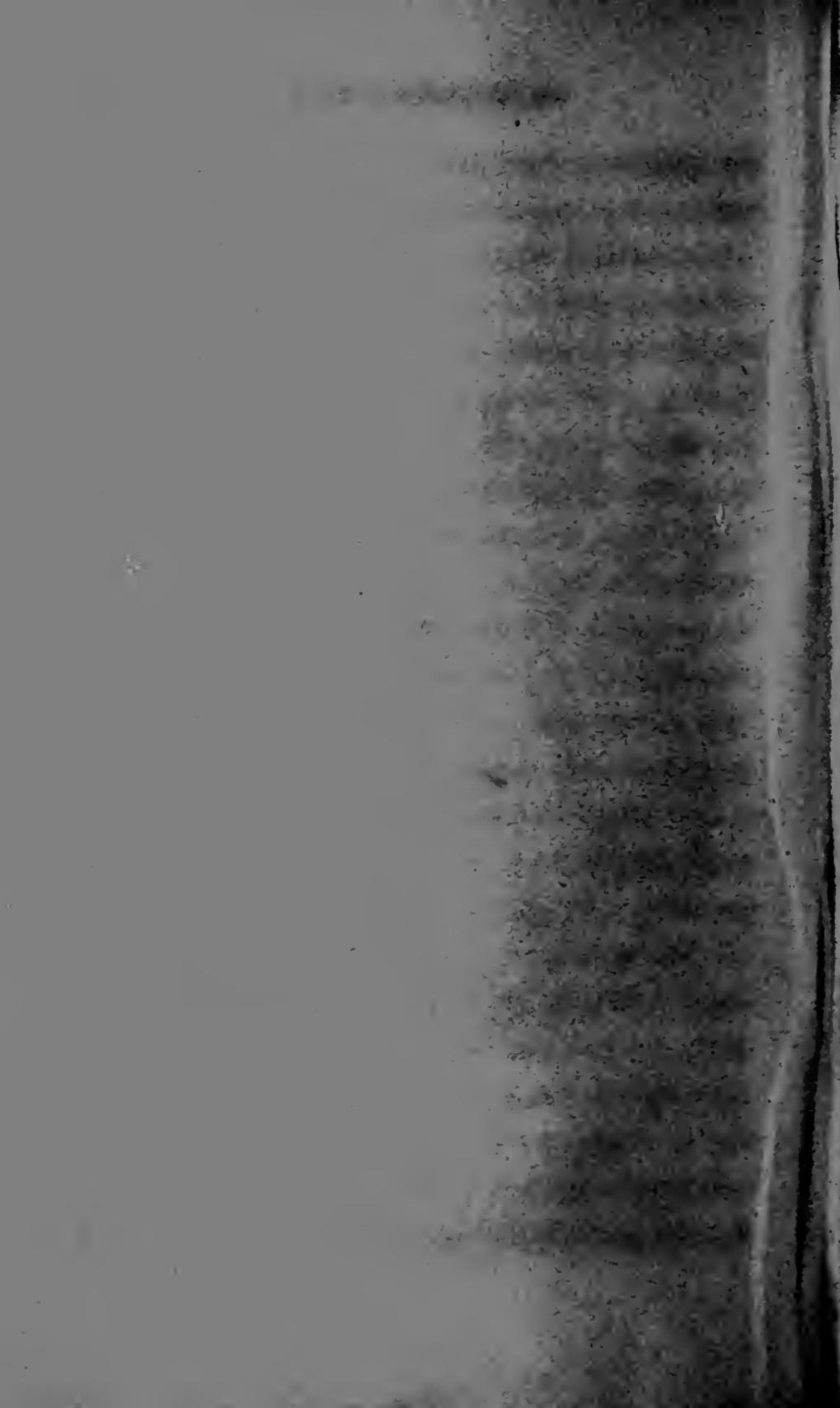
THE time of the Bishop's visitation approached ; and, after much instruction from their good Rector, as well as from their father and mother, Mary and Anna Benson were presented for Confirmation. Clothed in simple white, as in olden times the candidates were accustomed to be, these two children, early baptized into God's holy Church, stood humbly and submissively before their Bishop. Tears were in the eyes of both father and mother, as they saw their dear children thus take upon themselves their baptismal vows ; and tears streamed down the cheeks of the dear Pastor, as these loved and cherished lambs of the flock came up to the chancel, to receive the holy rite of Confirmation.

Mary's face was white as marble. No thought of the world seemed to touch that young girl's heart, as she knelt before the man of God. On Anna's cheeks there was a slight flush ; but her eyes, ever calm and serene, seemed now to beam more brightly and calmly than ever. Indeed, both



Mary and Anna Benson receiving Confirmation.

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the girls appeared so solemn, so devout, that all saw it was no vain service they were engaging in.

On their return home, the children were alternately folded in the arms of their father and mother, Mr. Benson saying, as he kissed each one, "God's blessing rest upon you, daughter dear; bright jewels are you now to us; and may you ever shine in the kingdom of our God."

And now came the time when these two girls were to receive the Holy Communion. Again and again did Mr. Potter examine them, that they should come not lightly to this sacred feast, and their father and mother had long and serious conversations with them. One by one, the sentences in the exhortations in the Communion service were carefully read over, and made the subject of conversation.

" You now see what is required of you, my children," said Mr. Benson; " it is all summed up in this short exhortation, ' Ye who do truly and earnestly repent you of your sins, and are in love and charity with your neighbors, and intend to lead a new life, following the commandments of God, and walking from henceforth in His holy ways; draw

near with faith, and take this holy sacrament to your comfort.' Now do you not see that he who fully carries out the spirit of this exhortation, is indeed and in truth a Christian? What more can be required of any one? We are all sinning constantly, either in thought, word or deed, against God. Do we desire to repent of our sins past? Then we must show our repentance in the way the Church points out, by partaking of this holy ordinance. Have you, dear children, in any way, offended any of your schoolmates or companions? You should not dare to approach God's holy table, till you are in peace and charity with them; therefore, this will lead you to cultivate the Christian grace of loving others, of forgiving others, if they have done aught to offend you. Do you desire, in all things, to do what will please your Heavenly Father? Ye are 'to follow the commandments of God, and walk from henceforth in His holy ways.' Now, dear ones, let me ask you if it is in this spirit you approach the table of our Lord? Mary and Anna, I ask you solemnly: Do you repent you of your sins, of all that you have done, by 'thought, word and deed,' against the Divine Majesty?"

"I trust I do, father," was Anna's trembling reply.

"Oh, father, we are so weak," murmured Mary.

"God gives strength to the weak, my child."

"Oh, dear father," answered the weeping girl, "indeed, indeed, I do try to do right."

"Then God will receive your efforts, darling, and bless them. Another question, my dear girls. Are you in love and charity with your neighbors?"

They both paused, while, apparently, in deep thought, and then Mary said, "I think we are, father."

"And now, my darlings, comes a solemn question. Do you 'intend to lead a new life,' depending on God's spirit for assistance, consecrating your lives, whether they be longer or shorter, to the service of Him who ransomed you with His own precious blood?"

With solemn earnestness the two girls said, "Father, we do, if God will help us."

"He will help you, dear children, for has He not given His promises to that effect? And now, my daughters, I hope you are prepared for this holy feast, and I therefore repeat, that you are to draw

near with faith, and then you will find that you take this Holy Sacrament to your comfort."

And so it proved, for, from that day, Mary and Anna Benson seemed to live with a more decided conviction of the nature of life—life, both temporal and spiritual. "A new life" they appeared, indeed, to be leading; and with holy joy and delight their parents, and their pastor, saw that they were daily growing in grace and increasing in holiness.

CHAPTER X.

SEVERAL months passed on, and the two girls were every day becoming brighter and brighter jewels to their parents. Some changes had taken place in the school which they had been in the habit of attending, and many of the parents, dissatisfied with the change, had taken their children home, and were about sending them to a boarding-school, in the neighboring town of B. Among these were Mrs. King and Mrs. Allen, whose children had always been on quite intimate terms with Mary and Anna

Benson. Of course, the girls came home every day with something new to tell about the boarding-school.

One day in particular Mary seemed full of something, which she had no idea of communicating, only she said, in a meaning tone of voice, as she went out of the room on her way to school, "Mrs. King is coming to see you this afternoon, for something, mother."

"Does she ever come for nothing, daughter?"

"Well, but mother, this is really something in earnest."

"What is it, then?"

Anna opened her lips to answer, but Mary said, "Oh hush, Anna, please, and let Mrs. King tell her own story. She can tell it best."

The mother urged them no more, and in an hour or so Mrs. King came in. She was as full of the boarding-school as the children had been, and she soon made known to Mrs. Benson the object of her visit; it was to try to persuade her to send Mary and Anna to B. She dilated for a long time on the advantages to be derived from so doing, and when she paused to take breath, and to sum up her argu-

ments in the all-important question, "will you not send them?" she was surprised by the decided but gentle answer of Mrs. Benson, "I cannot consent to part with my children."

"What!" exclaimed Mrs. King, "not when it is for their interest and advantage?"

"I have yet to be convinced," mildly answered Mrs. Benson, "that it is for their interest or advantage."

"But have I not shown you the advantages of such a course? Your children depend now altogether too much upon you. Send them away, and they will learn independence of character, and to rely more on their own judgment, and they will come back to you finished and accomplished young ladies."

A slight smile played about Mrs. Benson's mouth, and then she said, earnestly, "God forbid that I should ever see my children worse than they are now."

"Worse!" exclaimed Mrs. King, in an excited tone, and with heightened color, "do you call it worse to change little children, hitherto tied to their mother's apron-strings, into well-educated, sensible girls?"

"My children are getting their education here every day. What more can you ask?"

"Education! I should like to know what you call education?"

"They are taught daily that this life is given them to prepare for another. Is not that the highest kind of education?"

"But their accomplishments! or do you mean to be so strict as not to allow them any?" asked Mrs. King, in a tone of voice almost approaching to a sneer.

"What do you call accomplishments?" quietly asked Mrs. Benson.

"Why, music, painting, dancing, and such like."

"As for music, Mary has but little taste for it, and she has already had her choice, either to have so much money expended each year for it, or to take that money for something else."

"And what did she choose?"

"Not to take music lessons."

"And you did not urge her?"

"We never urge our children beyond their tastes, unless it is when their taste is in favor of wrong objects."

"Oh, how queer you all are ! Well, and Anna ?"

"Anna has a great love for music, therefore, we allow her to cultivate it. Both the girls seem to have a taste for drawing, and when we have a good opportunity, they will take lessons."

"Well, a good opportunity now offers," said Mrs. King, triumphantly, "for there is a superior teacher of drawing in the Academy at B.

"But I told you before, Mrs. King, I cannot consent to part with my children, at least," she added, with much feeling, "not as long as God spares them to me."

"But there is the other accomplishment of dancing, do you not mean your children should learn that ? It makes girls so active—so sprightly."

"Are my children inactive, or slow in their motions ?" asked Mrs. Benson, with apparent simplicity.

"Oh, no ! your children are already quite graceful, but you cannot tell how much more graceful and genteel it would make them, if they were in the habit of dancing."

"What is your idea in allowing your children to learn to dance," if I may ask ?"

"Oh, as I said before, just to make them graceful, genteel and accomplished, for when they grow up and go into society, to balls and parties, and such things, they would cut a sorry figure, without knowing how to dance."

"But I do not intend my children shall ever go to balls and parties, and such things."

Mrs. King opened her large eyes with astonishment. "What do you mean?" she asked.

"Simply what I say; that I do not intend my children shall ever go to such places of amusement and dissipation."

"Why not, may I ask?"

"Because I have solemnly promised for them to renounce the pomps and vanity of the world; and what are 'pomps and vanity' to them, but dress, gayety and frivolity."

"Do you mean to deprive your children of all amusements, I should like to know?" testily demanded Mrs. King. "Then they will be dull indeed."

"Are my children dull and spiritless?"

"No; they are mere children now, and are taken up with the sports of childhood. What is to sup-

ply the place of these childish amusements, when they grow up?"

"The pleasures of home, of hours well spent in domestic and intellectual duties. These, to them, must take the place of fashionable amusements."

"But will they be satisfied with this mode of life?"

"If they know no other to compare it with, how can they be dissatisfied?"

"Well, then, are you satisfied with allowing your children to know no other life? Is it not better for them to know all kinds, and then to permit them to make their own choice?"

"Is not the heart naturally evil; and is it not then to be feared, that they would be more likely to choose the unholy than the holy, if left to their own inclination? I feel that it is binding on Christian parents to bring up their children as Christians, and not as the children of the world."

"But, suppose that, after all you do for them, your children, after they have arrived at years of discretion, go astray from the right paths, where, then, is the influence of your early teachings?"

"Would you make God a liar?" asked Mrs.

Benson, gravely ; "yet has He not promised to keep those who are His ?"

"Well, but how then do you account for so many children of Christian parents going astray ?"

"Simply because they have not had the right kind of religious instruction."

"Were you to die now, should you have no doubts, no fears, for your childrens' future path in life ?"

"None whatever. I should, indeed, be a poor child of God, if I could not trust my children, where I would my own soul. They have early had the seeds of a religious education implanted within them. We have nourished and watched over them with much care—"

"That is true," interrupted Mrs. King, as visions of her own neglected offspring floated before her ; "never was a more devoted mother on earth than you are."

"Thank you ; but I was on the point of saying, that our children are now old enough to know right from wrong, to choose the right and forsake the wrong. True, they have their faults, as who, even among older Christians, have not ? Yet when they

do wrong, they know that they must repent of their sins, and try to lead a new life. If they follow the teachings of the Church, they cannot grow up otherwise than as Christians?"

"Why, Mrs. Benson, you seem to depend upon the Church for everything; and to think that every one who does as the Church says, will be saved."

"Do you not think, Mrs. King, that the principles of the Church, if fully carried out, tend to foster and promote the Christian graces?"

"I don't know, I never thought about it before."

"Just look at what we promise for our children in Baptism?"

"Well, everybody knows that," said Mrs. King, with impatience.

"But does every one practise it? If, after promising for our children to 'renounce the devil and all his works, the vain pomp and glory of the world, with all covetous desires of the same, and the sinful desires of the flesh;' and to 'obediently keep God's holy will and commandments, and walk in the same all the days of our life;' we allow them to grow up in open violation of these vows—is not their blood upon us? If they are taught that light and trifling

amusements, expensive dress and fashion, are among the vain pomps of the world ; that passion, and following the dictates of their own will, are among ‘the sinful desires of the flesh ;’ and to know that all these must be renounced, that all their unholy dispositions and affections must be brought into strict subjection to God’s holy will, what is this but being a Christian, in deed and in truth ?”

“ Well, for my part, I am willing to acknowledge that you have succeeded well with your children,—certainly far better than I have with mine,” and Mrs. King sighed as she spoke ; “ but you have had different materials to work upon, for I believe your children are better disposed by nature than mine.”

Mrs. Benson made no answer to this, but she might have said she began earlier with her children, and devoted more time and attention to them, than Mrs. King had.

After a short pause, Mrs. King resumed the conversation, by returning to the subject of the boarding-school : “ Then you are determined not to allow your girls to go to B. ?” she said.

“ Oh, yes, fully determined. And even if I was

not so unwilling to send them from me, I should not permit them to go to B."

"And why not?" asked Mrs. King, sharply.

"Because it is not a Church institution."

"Well, if that is not the queerest thing you have said yet. Refuse a good school, because Church people do not teach it!"

"No, not so much because 'Church people do not teach it,' as that the doctrines of the Church are not there inculcated. And, besides, they would be entirely deprived of the services of the Church, for you know there is no church in the town of B."

"Well, would it hurt them if they were obliged, for a few months, to attend, what I suppose you would call a sectarian place of worship? They would prize the Church services the more after being deprived of them."

"I think you must admit that is rather a poor argument, my dear Mrs. King. As well deprive ourselves of the Holy Bible, under the plea, that if for a while taken from us, we should better know how to appreciate it; or go where the Sabbath is openly violated, that we may learn more reverence for the Lord's day. Such experiments have sometimes

been tried, but generally with painful results. I have known the seeds of heresy and schism planted in many a youthful heart, by parents allowing their children to go from the Church. ‘But as for me, and my house, we will serve the Lord,’ where our vows have been made. Our children have been baptized in the Church, and in the Church they must remain, at least as long as they are under our control. Should they, when legally of age, choose to leave the Church, upon their heads must rest the awful sin. But I am not afraid that they, or any others who are rightly educated in the ways of the Church, will ever stray from her paths.”

“But it does sometimes happen; even you must allow, that some do leave the Church.”

“Yes, but that only proves what I said, they have not been rightly educated. Either the parents have not sufficiently impressed the claims of the Church upon them, while they were young and under their control, or else they have tampered with sacred things, by allowing themselves, from curiosity, or some other motive, equally wrong, to go to other places of worship; thus fostering in their hearts a hankering after strange things, and a disposition to

leave the old and right paths of the Church, for the novel creeds of man's invention."

" Well, but suppose you could not get access to a Church school, would you then allow your children to grow up in ignorance, rather than to go to any other?"

" My children could never grow up in ignorance, if brought up in the Church, for the services of the Church, of themselves, open mines of thought to all her members."

" Well, I declare, you are heart and soul bound up in the Church, I see plainly, and there is no use in attempting to shake any of your opinions, so I may as well spare my efforts." And Mrs. King took her leave, telling all her friends, afterwards, that Mrs. Benson was just the oddest woman she ever met with in all her life.

When the girls returned from school, Mary carefully watched her mother's countenance, to see if anything new had taken place, for Mrs. Benson said nothing on the subject of Mrs. King's visit. At last Mary ventured to ask, timidly, if Mrs. King had been there.

"Yes," said Mrs. Benson, but without saying another word.

This seemed to act as a rebuff to Mary, so she remained silent, till Anna said, "Did she ask you about the school, mother?"

"Yes," again said Mrs. Benson.

"Oh, mother," said Mary, eagerly, "what did she say, and what did you tell her?"

"What she said, my daughter, I cannot repeat to you; what I said you will think, perhaps, more important. I told her I could not consent to have you go."

Mary's countenance fell, but she merely said, "oh, mother!"

"Would you like to go?" said Mrs. Benson, noticing her disappointed look.

"Why, yes, mother, I think so. So many girls are going, and there is something so nice and grand in going to a boarding-school;" and she laid particular emphasis on the last words.

"And in leaving your mother, and your father, and your little brother, is there anything particularly nice and grand in that?"

Mary's eyes instantly filled with tears, and running

up to her mother, and tenderly embracing her, and then snatching a kiss from little Jamie, she said, "oh, mother, I did not think of that ; no, mother, we could not go even if you were willing." And the affectionate child kissed her mother, again and again.

"But mother," asked Anna, "what makes the other girls so eager to go?"

"I suppose they have Mary's idea, that it is rather grand to go to a boarding-school."

Mary blushed, and said, "oh, Anna, it is because they have not such a dear home as we have. Mother, I am perfectly satisfied with the idea of staying at home."

"I am very glad to hear it," was her mother's answer ; and so the subject was dropped.

CHAPTER XI.

FOUR years have passed happily over the family of Mrs. Benson, since they were first introduced to the notice of the readers of this little work. Mary and Anna were daily proceeding, "in all virtue and godliness of living," and were, indeed, precious jewels to their fond parents, and chosen lambs in the flock, over which the Lord had made the good Mr. Potter an overseer. The little James, too, now began to play a prominent part on the stage of life. Like his sisters, he was early trained in the ways of righteousness and peace; and though a noisy and playful boy, he was, from his infancy, characterized by great affectionateness of disposition, and a readiness to submit to all the commands laid upon him. In all his play, in all his dealings with his little companions, he was taught to go by the golden rule. As soon as he was able to know what "a solemn vow, promise and profession," his sponsors had made for him at his baptism; he was shown that all things, in his life and disposition, must be

brought in accordance with those vows ; and though, like all children, yea, and even like children of a larger growth, he often strayed from the right path, it was the straying of a child from the parents' side, caught by the passing sweets and pleasing shows of earthly things, to return with yet more joy and zest to purer pleasures.

In the midst of the gentle peace of this lovely family, sorrow was about to enter. Anna, who had reached the age of fourteen, was a peculiarly delicate child. She was exceedingly slight, so that she seemed much younger than she really was. She now began, without perceptible signs of disease, to languish. The long summer days were to her days of weariness and languor. The only hours that were pleasant to her were the earliest hours of the day. At the first dawn she was ready to rise. Her morning duties of prayer and praise ended, she would seat herself in a low, easy chair, by the window, and repeat her favorite morning hymns, among which were those choice productions of the good old Kenn, and the modern lyrist, Keble. As soon as the heat of the day came on, she was incapacitated for all exertion, either physical or

mental, by that indescribable feeling of languor, of which only those who have experienced it can tell its power.

"I cannot even think, dear mother," she would say. "The beautiful summer, which I have always loved so much, is passing away, and I cannot enjoy it as I could once. The world is very beautiful, mother;" and a gentle sigh escaped her as she spoke. "I could not but think last night, mother, as I lay awake, and looked out upon the stars, what a beautiful world it is. I think God is very good to permit us to live in such a world, don't you, dear mother?"

But the mother could not answer, for her fond heart was rendered anxious by the unconscious admittance of her daughter, that sleep had begun to desert her, who, of all others, had always seemed so much to enjoy that healthy and invigorating blessing. She turned away her head, that Anna might not see the tears which filled her eyes.

"Mother," said Anna, after a short pause, "don't laugh at me, or think it is a childish folly; but I thought last night the stars looked so pure and holy, and bright, that, do you know, mother, I fancied

they were angels' eyes looking down upon me."

Mrs. Benson regained her usual composure, and she said : "It is a beautiful sight, dear, to see the stars on a bright, clear night. They always seem to me emblems of purity, and light, and holiness; and the more we think of them, the more do we realize the amazing power of Him, who called all these worlds into being, and from nothing, too."

"God is very great, mother."

"And very good in His greatness, my daughter."

"Yes, mother," Anna said, with much apparent feeling. "How good He has been to me, in giving me such dear parents," and she kissed her mother with eagerness—"and such a darling sister and little brother. And then, mother, when I think how good God is, in having me brought up a Christian child, instead of a poor ignorant heathen, I feel that I cannot love Him too much."

"You remember, daughter, how our 'General Thanksgiving' tells us to show our gratitude."

"Oh yes ! mother, 'not only with our lips, but in our lives, by giving up ourselves to thy service, and by walking before thee in holiness and righ-

teousness all our days, through Jesus Christ our Lord.' "

"Do you try, thus, to show your thankfulness, dear child?"

"I trust I do, mother," was her humble answer.

"You do not think God is unkind to you in allowing you to be sick, Anna?"

"Oh, mother!" she exclaimed, in a reproachful tone, "how could you think I should feel so? The Bible tells us that He afflicts us as a tender parent, for our good; and," looking at her mother, with a beaming smile, "*we* can understand that comparison."

"You do not feel very sick, Anna?"

"Oh no, mother, no pain at all, but weak, very weak, and good for nothing," and the tears filled her eyes, as she laid her head on her mother's shoulder. "Oh, mother, all can do something for somebody's good, but me, poor, useless me!"

"Anna, God has various dealings with His children; some He commands to do His will in active service, others to suffer it, by patiently bearing all that He sends upon them. When you are well, I hope always to see you active in doing all you can

for Him ; but when unfitted for active exertion, you must suffer that will. Do you understand me, my love ?”

“ Yes, mother,” she said, faintly, “ and I am willing to suffer, or to do as it pleases Him.”

She then seemed disposed to sleep, and her mother laid her gently upon her bed. But soon little James came in, and with his affectionate ways, tried to interest her in his play. But she looked on with languid eyes, which ever and anon filled with tears. At last Mrs. Benson, fearing that the child would annoy her, said, “ Anna, does your little brother trouble you ?”

The pent-up feelings now burst forth, and for a few moments, thick falling tears were her only answer.

“ Why do you not speak to me, my daughter ?” asked her mother, soothingly.

“ Oh, mother,” sobbed Anna, “ do not think me unkind or harsh ; but Jamie makes such a noise, it makes me feel tired.”

“ And why did you not tell me before ?”

“ Because,” she said, in a tone so piteous, it brought tears to her mother’s eyes, “ because I was

trying to learn to suffer, mother. And then I was afraid you would think I was getting cross and peevish, when it was only tired I felt, and weak."

All this time Jamie stood looking on, with his bright eyes fixed first on one, and then on the other, as though it was difficult for him to comprehend what was going on. Seeing his mother look grave, he said, "Am I naughty, ma?"

"No, my dear, only thoughtless. You make too much noise for your sick sister."

He instantly climbed up to the bed, and throwing his chubby arms around his sister's neck, said, "I sorry to hurt you with noise, deary Anna. I still now;" and laying his head on the same pillow with her's, he remained perfectly quiet till Anna dropped asleep, and then he crept softly to his mother's side, and whispered, "Anna sick ma, will Anna die?"

Poor Mrs. Benson ! it was not the first time this question had come before her ; but she said nothing now, fearing to disturb her sleeping child ; so taking little Jamie by the hand, she led him into her own room, where her full heart was relieved by a burst of tears. "Is she going to die, mother, and be laid in a coffin ?" he asked, in a low whisper.

"Oh, my boy, I cannot tell. God only knows that, my little son."

"But we may pray to the great God, mother; and then He make her live?" he said inquiringly.

"If he will, my child."

"Does God like people to die, mother?"

"He knows they are happier in Heaven, if they have been good here."

"Anna good here; Anna no need, to go to Heaven to be good."

"She will be better there, and happier."

The little boy here began to put up his lips, and to cry: "Jamie don't want his deary Anna to die," he said.

"Dear child," said his mother, "we do not any of us want her to go away from us; but if it is the Lord's will, darling, we must submit."

This conversation produced a great effect upon the sensitive child. He began to know and to think more about death; and daily wanted his mother to tell him, more and more, about being good, that when he died, he, too, might go to Heaven.

CHAPTER XII.

EVERYTHING was done for Anna Benson that could be done; but she became thinner and paler every day, and her strength visibly failed. It was evident that consumption, in its mildest form, had laid its hand upon her. Mrs. Benson now decided to take her to a warm climate for the winter, hoping that a sea voyage would invigorate her. Mr. Benson could not leave; he would stay at home with Mary and James; and the fond mother, who had never allowed herself to be separated a day or a night from her children, now made up her mind to tear herself away from two of them, hoping thereby one precious life might be saved.

One day she broached the subject to Anna, who sat by an open window, holding a flower in her thin fingers. "The flowers will soon be gone, dear daughter," said she.

Anna turned her languid eyes towards her mother, smiled, and said: "They will come again in the spring, mother, dear. Do you know, mother, I

was thinking of that just now ; and I can remember, that some years ago, when I was a very little girl, you taught me about the flowers and leaves coming, and then I thought that was what it meant, when we said, in the Creed, we believed 'in the resurrection of the body.' Is it, mother ?"

"There seems a great degree of similarity in the two, dear ; in autumn the flowers wither and fade away, the green leaves turn yellow, and fall to the ground ; but the warm spring comes, and the fresh leaves shoot out, and beautiful flowers start up around us. So it is with the body. It dies, and is laid away in the grave, but when the spring of another life comes upon us, the body is raised to incorruption and immortality."

"It is strange, mother. Is it not almost a miracle ?"

"Is it any stranger, than that God should first have created us out of nothing ?"

"No, mother ; but to think of dying, and then living again ;" and the dear child fixed her eyes on the flower, as though in deep thought ; at last she said : "I have always loved flowers, dear mother."

"I know you have, dear ; and it is because I

wish you to love them, as all God's works should be loved, that I have had them around you. But the flowers will soon be gone, daughter ; and then, what will you do without them ? Would you not like to live where flowers bloom all the year?"

"If my home were there, mother, if you all were there ; but I could not leave you all—at least," she said, in a different tone, "not now."

Her mother's face grew pale, but she said, calmly, "Anna, the doctor thinks you might be better, if you were away from this cold climate this winter."

Anna turned her eyes inquiringly to her mother's face, but said nothing.

"Should you not like to cross the sea, dear, to some of those beautiful lands you have read of, where are bright flowers and delicious fruits ?"

"With you all, mother ?" she asked, her eyes lighting up at the mention of the flowers.

"With me, dear."

"And leave dear father, and Mary, and James ?" she quickly asked. "No, mother," she said, with unwonted decision in her tone. "I should love to be on the sea, and watch the stars at night, and see

the beautiful lands of the south, but not to leave my father—and—and—.” Here her sobs stopped her.

“Not if it is God’s will, my own darling?”

“Is it God’s will?” she asked, with earnestness.
“Mother, come close to me, and I will whisper something in your ear. And the child went on with eagerness, and in words far beyond her years—
“Mother, I have not told you before, but I will tell you now, it is God’s will that I must die. Nay, start not, dear mother, nor weep,” and she kissed the tears from her mother’s eyes; “but every night, when I look up to the stars, I seem to hear them say, ‘come up here?’ and every morning, when I look over the green earth, and say, ‘how beautiful the world is,’ something whispers to me, ‘Heaven is more beautiful still.’ Mother, I feel I must die; but, mother, I want to die at home, here, with you, and all I love. And I must have the services of the Church, and the Sacrament of the Lord’s Supper to strengthen me, mother, and then I can pass away in His own good time; but ask me not to go away from you, till He calls me home. You will not ask me, mother, dear?”

“I will not, my love,” said Mrs. Benson, strug-

gling with her tears ; "but O righteous Father," she said, raising her streaming eyes to Heaven, "wilt thou not take this cup from me?"

"O mother, can you not say what *He*, too, said, 'nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt?'"

"I will endeavor to do so, dear Anna."

Anna now fell into a gentle slumber, and when she awoke Mary was sitting beside her. "Where is mother?" asked Anna.

"She is asleep, dear, she was very weary."

"Has she told you, Mary?" she whispered.

"Told me what?" asked Mary, quickly.

"Oh, nothing, now. She will tell you, I suppose, when she gets up."

An expression of pain passed over Mary's beautiful face ; she said nothing, but a perception of the truth seemed to dawn upon her.

That night the fearful truth was told to the assembled household, that Anna thought she must die. Grave and sad were the faces gathered around the evening board, while the sick child lay in an adjoining room.

"Oh, mother," said Mary, "it is so sudden to

me, I cannot bring my mind to think of it ; and oh ! what will sustain us ?”

The mother's tears prevented her from answering, but her father said, “ God's grace, my daughter. We have served Him in prosperity, let us not forsake Him in the time of adversity ;” and with a face calm, yet pale, he went into Anna's room. She put up her lips to kiss him, and murmured, “ Dear father !”

“ Precious daughter !” he answered, as he fondly embraced her.

“ They sat for a few moments in silence. “ Sit close to me, father,” she said, “ and talk to me.”

“ Are you in pain, daughter ?”

“ Oh, no, dear father ; I do not ever suffer pain. God is very good to me, in allowing me to be sick so easy.”

“ God is always good, my darling.”

“ Oh, yes,” she answered, with much animation. “ Have the stars begun to come out yet, father ?”

“ Yes, dear, I see a few glimmering in the heavens.”

“ I have always loved the stars. Do you not remember,” she added, with much simplicity, “ when

I was a very little girl, I used to get up early in the winter mornings, and stand at the window, and see the stars fade away ; and then I wondered so much where they all went to. Do you not remember it, dear father ?”

“ Oh, yes, Anna, I remember all about you.”

Again she kissed him, and said : “ Dear father, how much I love you !”

And he returned her kisses, and said : “ And I have loved you, dear daughter.”

“ Everybody is very good to me ; and I thank the good God over all, for making them kind to me.” She then whispered softly into his ear : “ Dear father, I think I shall not stay here long. Something here,” and she laid her hand on her heart, “ seems to tell me so.”

(Her father’s face was hidden from her sight ; but she saw his strong frame shake with emotion. She laid her little hand on his head, and said, in tones of perfect endearment : “ Dear, dear father !”)

Still he spoke not. He struggled manfully with his feelings, and at last, raising his head, and kissing her again and again, he said, in tones of mingled anguish and resignation : “ God grant that I may

bear this affliction as a Christian father should."

After another pause, during which the child had not taken her eyes from her father's face, he said : " Dear Anna, you know the doctor says you may be better, by going away for this winter."

" Ah, father," she said quickly, " do not speak of that. I love you all too much to leave you. If he was sure," and she laid marked emphasis on the words ; " why, then, I might make up my mind to go, dear mother going with me ; but, after all, dear father, it is so uncertain. I might be better for awhile ; but, father, dear, do you not remember that old nurse used to tell how much I was like ma's sister Anna ? and you know she was but a little older than I am when she died. Now, dear father, don't call me superstitious or childish, (though I am but a child, I know,) but I have always believed her early death would be mine." She paused, a little exhausted, and, after she had regained strength, she said : " Father, dear, if you wish me to go I will go, and cheerfully, too. Dear mother says I must both do and suffer God's holy will ;" and this she said in a tone of such pious resignation, that it

touched her father's heart, and the large tears fell from his eyes.

"Nay, my daughter," he said, "I will not urge you. You must do as you wish in this respect; your father will not send you away from your home."

"And the Church, too, father. Dear Mr. Potter will sorely miss this lamb of the flock, as he calls me," she said, a bright smile lighting up her face.

Again she slept; and when she awoke she was so much refreshed, that she sat up the greater part of the evening, and seemed quite like her former self, except that a deeper shade of thought than usual sat upon her pale face. When she retired for the night, she gave a long, earnest kiss to her father and mother, and while she held a hand of both in hers, she said: "I will go, dear father and mother; I have quite decided, and am satisfied. Yes, I will go." She spoke in low, but determined tones; still it was with difficulty she could keep the tears from springing to her eyes. "It is hard, father, but I must go away some time or other; and it will be no harder now than to wait longer. Yet," she said, in a still lower tone, "I wish, whenever I do die, to

die at home, with you all about me. But I will do and suffer what the Lord lays upon me."

It was a sore trial to her parents to decide in this difficult dilemma. Their child was given them by God, to recall whenever He chose. Had that time now come? Must they make up their minds to part with her, or would they use all the means in their power to prolong life? Their physician, acquainted with her constitution, from her earliest infancy, thought a winter in a mild climate might possibly lengthen her days. She had never been a robust child; and strong in her affections, she clung so closely to her friends, that a separation from them might produce a bad effect on her sensitive nature. She had lived in the light of her home, and now to take her, in her weakness, away from it, how would she bear it? These were questions difficult to be answered; yet now that the child herself had consented to go, one great obstacle was removed. Earnest were the prayers offered up for guidance; bitter were the struggles in the heart of both parents and child, yet the child had given her consent, and should the parents withhold theirs? A long conversation was again held with the physician, but he expressed

himself now doubtful about the result, though he was inclined to think it might be favorable. Now, was it best to sunder the ties which so strongly bound Anna to her home, for this uncertainty? Would they not leave the matter in the hands of God, and watch the leadings of Providence? And so, with calm and peaceful hearts, they gave it all up, determined to submit with cheerfulness to the will of Him who ordereth all things for good.

Their decision was made for them, ere morning's light shone upon them. Since Anna's sickness, Mrs. Benson had taken her into her own room. That night she heard her groan two or three times, as if in pain. Her mother bent over her, but she was asleep, though she occasionally moved, and moaned like one in distress. "Anna!" said her mother, in fond tones, "Anna dear, do you feel worse?" The child answered not, but restlessly moved from side to side, and then she spoke, though in her sleep—"mother, dearest mother, a jewel, mother."

Mrs. Benson gently awakened her. "Oh, mother," she said, "I am so disturbed here," and she laid her mother's hand on her chest.

"Have you been dreaming bad dreams, dear?"

A smile like an angel's flitted over her pale face, and an expression of peace stole over it, as she quickly said, "not bad dreams, mother, but good ones—bright ones. I heard some one say to me, 'mother's jewel, shine here.' " And she looked up with a happy smile on her face, which was soon changed, as a spasm of pain passed over it. In a moment she was in her mother's arms, and panting for breath. Her father and Mary were speedily roused, and in a few minutes Mr. Benson stood, with the doctor, at his child's bedside. She was evidently laboring under some severe oppression of the lungs. Her breath came quick and short, and she seemed as though she was about to die. The mother held her with fearful calmness. Not a muscle of that pale face moved, as she bent with anxious gaze over her sinking child—not a tear bedewed those calm, bright eyes, as Anna occasionally gave an appealing glance up to them. The father knelt by the bedside and prayed. Oh! how he struggled for calmness, for resignation! At length they seemed given to him, and with strength, as from on high, he stood up and bent over the dying one.

"My daughter!" he said, in calm, affectionate tones, "is it well with thee, my precious child?"

The dear girl turned her eyes to her father's face, and in low, distinct tones, answered, "It is well."

After several violent spasms, she seemed more at ease, till all at once she started up, and with an expression of pain on every feature of her face, she uttered a prolonged groan, and then the blood streamed from her mouth. Mrs. Benson stifled a cry of anguish, but never relaxed her hold. Mr. Benson buried his face in his hands; and sent up an agonizing prayer to heaven. Mary, with impetuous fondness, threw herself on the bed beside her darling sister, and sobbed in the bitterness of her wo.

The doctor was grave and calm. "Hash," he said, "she will be easier now."

In a few minutes the bleeding ceased, and she sank back on her pillow exhausted. "Will she live now?" exclaimed Mary, snatching the doctor's hand. "Oh, do make her live."

"Mary," said her father, reprovingly, "do you not know that the issues of life and death are with God, and not with man? 'He killeth and He maketh alive.' We must trust our all with Him."

CHAPTER XIII.

THREE or four days passed away. All pain, all distress had left the declining child, but a sense of utter weakness prostrated her completely. She could not sit up at all, nor speak without effort. No cloud passed over that serene face, already marked for Heaven. No moan escaped her lips. She looked like a vision from another world, as she lay, with her thin hands clasped on her breast, and her pale face lighted up by those radiant eyes, already filled with a Heavenly light. Gently her few remaining days on earth passed. Night and day her mother watched over her. Her father, too, was constantly by her. Mary sat like a statue beside her bed; and even the merry little James was hushed to silence.

Good Mr. Potter came daily. Anna's face was lighted up, and a peculiar smile played over it, whenever she saw him. "My own Pastor," she would murmur, as the good old man stooped to kiss her forehead. "My own little lamb," he would an-

sver, tenderly, as the tears streamed down his withered cheek.

One day he said to her, "Anna, dear child, would you like me to administer the Holy Communion to you?"

She turned her eyes towards her parents, as if asking their consent.

"Are you strong enough, dearest?" asked her father.

"God will strengthen me," she whispered.

The holy ordinance was administered, and the dying child was strengthened by it. It was a solemn sight—that aged man, in his white robe, giving the sacrament of the body and blood of the crucified one, to that departing child. It was a scene fit for angels to look upon. Anna's thin fingers clasped the bread as it was given her, and lifting up her eyes to Heaven, she seemed lost in prayer and praise. After the solemn service was over, she murmured, again and again, "given for thee—given for thee! Blessed, blessed Jesus!"

It was evident to all she was fast passing away. She grew weaker and weaker every day, but still seemed happy and peaceful. Her thin, white face,

became thinner and whiter, but no shade of anxiety or terror ever marred its serenity.. Like a gentle zephyr she passed on to her last resting-place. It was but little she could say, and that at long intervals ; but her expressive eyes, those large and beautiful eyes, seeming now more beautiful than ever, spoke what her lips failed to utter. They told of a peace that passed all understanding ; of holy hopes and joys ; of a firm and unshaken faith, that held fast on the word of Him who was her stay and comfort, while passing through the dark valley of the shadow of death.

The last day of her mortal life she lay propped up by pillows, with her eyes turned towards the window. "Beautiful world !" she whispered in her mother's ear, "but I am not sorry to leave it, mother." The setting sun threw its last rays on the head of the dying one, lighting it up as with a halo of glory.

"Mother," she softly said, "read the beautiful passage about the sun ;" and the mother, opening the Bible, read in calm, earnest tones : "The sun shall no more be thy light by day, neither for brightness shall the moon give light unto thee ; but

the Lord shall be unto thee an everlasting light, and thy God thy glory. Thy sun shall no more go down, neither shall thy moon withdraw itself, for the Lord shall be thine everlasting light, and the days of thy mourning shall be ended."

A sweet smile played over Anna's face, as her mother read these glowing words, and she lay still for a long time, with her eyes turned upward to the sky. When her father came into the room, she motioned to kiss him, and as he stooped over her, she put into his hands her little prayer-book, with the leaf turned down at the prayer for a sick child, in "the Order for the Visitation of the Sick." He knelt down beside the bed, and offered up this touching prayer; and, in a voice more audible than she had spoken in for several days, Anna uttered her fervent "Amen."

Before her father rose from his knees, she said: "Say 'Our Father,' too." In this prayer she repeated the petitions, clearly and distinctly, laying particular emphasis on the words, "Thy will be done."

Night came on apace. It was to her the night of death. Little Jamie came to give her his good-

night kiss; and she held him, for a long time, close to her heart: "Precious, precious brother," she uttered, "God bless thee;" and she kissed him, again and again; and, when he was led from her, she followed him with her eyes to the door, and, as it closed upon him, she softly whispered, "The last time." The tears slowly trickled down her cheeks, and, as her mother kissed them away, she looked up into her face with such a look of love, too deep for utterance, that the mother's heart was touched, and her self-possession forsaking her, she sobbed aloud: "Oh, my precious, darling child, must I give you up? Oh, Father, take this cup from me; it is too, too bitter! Oh, thou High-Priest, who wast 'touched with a feeling of our infirmities,' pity Thou me!" and the poor, stricken mother raised her streaming eyes to Heaven.

"Mother, darling mother," said Anna, speaking with much effort; "mother, dearest mother, remember you, too, must suffer, as well as do, the Lord's will. Oh, Saviour," she prayed, "strengthen Thou her."

Mrs. Benson soon regained her composure, and resumed her position by her child's side.

"Father, take me," Anna murmured.

Gently he took her in his arms. She motioned to be carried to the window. He took her there; and she gazed long and fixedly upon the stars, now looking so brightly down. Raising her slender finger, she pointed to the beautiful evening star, always her especial favorite: "Thou art looking down upon me," she whispered, "thou bright and beautiful star." After an earnest gaze upon the heavens, she seemed to be taking her last leave of them, and turning away her head, she closed her eyes, and said aloud: "No more on earth; but I shall see them hereafter, when they will shine brighter and purer."

Her father carried her to the bed. "Hold me, father," she said, "if you are not too tired."

He sat down in her favorite chair, and gently as a mother would soothe an infant, he held and caressed that dying girl. "Is the Saviour precious to you, darling?" he asked.

Her eyes raised to his, with a bright, beaming look, was her only answer.

"You have no fears, daughter?"

Again that thrilling look; it told of a fearless soul.

He recited to her the twenty-third Psalm. She listened with seeming avidity ; and when he had finished, said, "more."

He then repeated detached passages of Holy Writ, calculated to stay and strengthen her soul. Her face beamed with holy hope, as these striking promises sounded in her ear.

"Precious Bible!" she whispered.

He repeated some of the collects, particularly appropriate at this time.

"Dear, dear Church," she said, with startling energy, and suddenly turning herself towards her mother, and summoning up all her strength, she said, "Father, mother, I thank you for bringing me up in the Church. I am thankful I can die in the communion of the Catholic Church ; in the confidence of a certain faith ; in the comfort of a reasonable religious and holy hope ; in favor with thee, our God ;" lifting her eyes to Heaven, "and in perfect charity with the world." Exhausted with the effort, she sank back in her father's arms. Naught was heard to break the stillness of this chamber of death, but the thick-coming sobs of Mary, who knelt by the side of her father's chair. Anna seemed to hear

them, and to wish to comfort her sister, for stretching out her pale hand, she laid it, with trembling earnestness, upon Mary's head ; "Darling sister," she murmured, "and dear, dear little brother."

After an invigorating draught had been administered to her, she revived again, and seemed brighter and stronger than she had been all the day. Her dear Pastor came to see her, and a bright light shone in her eyes, as he sat down beside her. Stroking his thin grey hair, she said, "Good shepherd, kind Pastor." The old man was much affected, and drawing her toward him, he held her for a moment to his heart, and said, "Thou precious lamb of the flock, thou art going before thy old Pastor; but Anna, he trusts to meet thee there."

She put up her lips to kiss him, and said, "Thank you for your faithful care. I shall leave the Church on earth to join the company of saints above." She now began to sink rapidly. She pointed to the bed. Her father laid her down; she closed her eyes, and remained quiet a long time. They thought she slept. Suddenly her lips moved. Her father bent his head closer to her, and heard her whisper, "Suffer me not, at my last hour, from any pains of death,

to fall from thee ;" and then a look of agony rested on her face. She tightly held her mother's hand in hers, and seemed as if struggling, either with pain of body, or some inward emotion.

"Are you in pain, daughter, dear?" asked Mrs. Benson. For a moment she answered not; then the look of anguish quickly passed away, and her face assumed its usual serenity.

"It is gone now, mother," she said, in a low tone.

"Was it pain, my darling?

"Yes, mother, pain at 'leaving you all,'" and her eyes rested on each dear face; "but it is gone now. Oh, mother, father," she said, in energetic tones, "how I have loved you all! Yet blessed be God, He is dearer than all, and I can give you all up for His dear sake."

A smile again lighted up her face, and she whispered to her mother, "Have I proved a jewel, mother?"

"Oh! a precious, priceless jewel, my own loved child!"

"Then, is it too much, mother, to think I may be a jewel in the crown of my Saviour?"

"No! my daughter. He will, indeed, make you one."

Seeing the tears stream down her mother's pale face, she put up her lips to kiss her, and said in low, but distinct tones, "My own dear, dearest mother! God help you. Can you say, 'God's will be done, mother?'"

Mrs. Benson bowed her head on that of her child, and said, with gentle firmness, "I can—God's holy will be done."

"Amen," said the good old Pastor, and "Amen," responded Anna.

Then she turned to her father, "Father, I have been naughty to you, sometimes; kiss me forgiveness, my own darling father."

Her father's heart was too full for utterance. Again and again he kissed her, while the dear child held him fast in her emaciated arms. At last Mr. Benson spoke, "You have been a precious daughter to us, Anna, and God in Heaven bless you for it!"

A sweet smile was her only reply; and then she looked toward Mary, who was almost worn out with the intensity of her grief. "Let Mary come

to me," she whispered, and the sisters held each other in their last embrace.

"Darling, darling Anna, I cannot part with you!" Mary almost screamed; "no, I cannot; don't ask me to. What will be left to me without you, my gentle, loving sister?"

"Hush, Mary!" said Mr. Benson; "you disturb your sister."

"Oh, hush, Mary," softly whispered Anna; "can you not say, 'God's will be done?' I can," she added, with touching pathos.

The exhausted child could say no more; but she turned to Mr. Potter with such a meaning look, he instantly understood her, and kneeling down by her side, he slowly repeated the prayers for the sick and the dying, to each of which, Anna answered by a faint "Amen."

She whispered something, they scarcely knew what. Mr. Potter laid his ear near her mouth, and heard the words, "My dying testimony—the Church of Christ—my own Redeemer."

And now the sands of life were ebbing fast away. The hours of the precious child were numbered. She lay between her father and mother, resting

partly upon each. Her breath came slower and slower, and fainter and fainter. The candle of life, as it fluttered in its socket, sent up one brilliant flame, and the dying child, turning her large eyes, over which were gathered the films of death, alternately to her father and mother, slowly and distinctly repeated: "Mother, father, I want to go home! Blessed Jesus, I come!" and closing her eyes, she gently inclined toward her mother, and her spirit "departed to Him who gave it."

Beautiful!

For a long time the mother held the dead child to her heart, then laying her slowly down, she said, with touching earnestness: "I shall go to her, but she shall not return to me."

The father stooped over the body of his departed darling, and imprinted a long kiss upon her cold lips, while the aged Pastor said: "The Lord gave, the Lord taketh away, and blessed be the name of the Lord."

Mary arose from her kneeling position, and came to the bed: "Oh, Anna! Anna! come back to me!" she exclaimed; "come back to me! Oh, mother! how can I give her up; my playmate and companion, gentle, loving, too, as she always was!"

Oh, Anna ! what would I now give, if I had never spoken one harsh word to you, you darling, darling sister !” And she fell, almost insensible, at her father’s feet.

CHAPTER XIV.

BRIGHTLY and beautifully dawned the day, and as the early rays of the sun stole into the chamber of death, they fell on the lifeless body of Anna Benson. Calm and gentle was that face, even in death ; no cloud rested upon it ; a sweet smile was on the lips, which told that the spirit departed in peace from its clayey tenement.

With a face pale, yet calm, the mother still sat beside the bed of death. “ Oh, my husband,” she said, “ help me to bear this great affliction. It is our first sorrow, and it is a great one ; too great for human endurance, did He not give us strength. Precious, precious child !” and she kissed, again and again, the marble face. “ Thou art gone, and I will not grieve for thee.”

"And yet you weep," said Mr. Potter.

"Oh, not for her," she said, in pitiful tones, "not for her, the happy one, do I weep, but for me, the stricken mother," and she laid her head on the pillow, by the side of her child, while the tears streamed down her cheeks; then rising, and with strength, as from on high, she gazed long and earnestly on the face of the dead, saying, as she laid her hand on the child's head, "Rest thee now in the bosom of thy Saviour, my own precious child!" And with a holy light beaming from her eyes, she turned from the bed of death, to seek rest and solitude in her own room.

The day was spent sadly, but quietly, by all but Mary. She who was always so impetuous in her feelings, could not now meet death with composure, when he came to deprive her of her cherished sister. She gave herself up to violent bursts of grief, and then tried, again and again, to soothe herself to calmness. Her mother's face, so touching in its sadness, was a tacit reproof to her vehemence; her father's grave, subdued demeanor, went to her heart, and for their sakes, as well as for her own, she prayed and struggled for composure, and composure was given to her. Peace was poured into her heart,

and at last she was enabled to say, "thy will be done."

But her calmness was terribly shaken, when Anna's school-mates and companions came to see the lifeless remains of her who had always been so kind and loving, and forbearing towards them all. Some of the girls brought flowers and laid them beside the dead body ; "For," said Lucy Shaw, while tears streamed from her eyes, "She dearly loved the flowers while she was alive, and, perhaps, they will please her now."

The morrow came ; it was the Lord's day, a day of rest to them all. The whole household prepared for church. "Do you think, dear wife," said Mr. Benson, "you are able to go through with the services of the Church, to-day?"

"Oh, yes, my husband, they are just what I need to keep my fainting spirit up. I have always found the prayers of the Church so beneficial to me ; and I am sure they will now prove doubly refreshing and soothing."

And so they did. Leading her little James by the hand, she entered the house of God with slow and reverent steps, while Mr. Benson followed with

Mary. They could not but think of the dear one, who would never sit there beside them again ; but they thought of her as happier, and holier, and better, and their hearts were soothed.

Mr. Potter, when he came into the desk, after he had risen from his knees, instinctively looked towards their pew, and tears came into his eyes, as he, too, thought of the vacant seat ; but when he said, "The Lord is in His holy temple, let all the earth keep silence before Him"—all earthly feelings seemed subdued within him, and every heart in the congregation was touched.

Never were the services of the Church more impressive to the bereaved family, than on this day. The prayers seemed the very breathings forth of their own chastened spirits ; the psalms and the lessons were full of holy consolation and joy. When in the creed they professed their belief in "The communion of saints," all thought, for a moment, of the dear departed, who was already numbered among the saints of God.

There were some in the congregation who bitterly censured the conduct of Mr. and Mrs. Benson, for going out to church at such a time. "It is so entirely

against etiquette," said one. "How could they command their feelings?" asked another. But they felt it was their duty to worship God in adversity as well as in prosperity. Their stricken hearts longed for the prayers of the Church, and in the public use of them they had received consolation and strength, and therefore what ought they to care for the remarks of others?

"Oh!" said Mrs. Benson, on her return home, "I never more fully realized the spiritual beauty of our liturgy, than I have this day. How the soul is carried out of itself in those solemn prayers, those lofty hymns of praise! How full of touching pathos and beauty is the Litany! Who can lightly prize such solemn services? Not they, surely, whose hearts are touched with sorrow, as ours are. Dear, dear Anna! how much she enjoyed these services! How constant at church—how fixed her attention—how earnest in her supplications!" and the mother heaved a sigh, as thoughts of the past came crowding to her heart.

"Anna, happy now in Heaven," said little James, putting up his rosy mouth for a kiss, "and Jamie will be a good boy, and go there, too, when he die."

The fond mother kissed the dear little prattler, and then went alone to the chamber of death, and kneeling there, she poured out her heart in earnest prayer. Then she sat down beside the dead, and gazed for a long time on the sweet face of her child. Pale and mournful was that mother's face ; again and again the tears trickled down her cheeks, as she thought, that no more would those eyes, so beautiful in their gentle light, look upon her ; no more would that sweet voice sound in her ears ; no more those loving arms embrace her.

"Oh, daughter of my heart !" she exclaimed, in the bitterness of her sorrow, "must I, can I give thee up ?" and then she would chide herself for indulging, for one moment, a rebellious thought. "He gave, and He must take away, whenever it pleases Him. Oh, teach me," she said, raising her eyes to Heaven, "to submit to thy most righteous will. She was a jewel to us on earth, now she shines a brighter jewel in the kingdom of our God. I will give her up, yea, and try to do it cheerfully, too, since I know and believe that the change is for her a glorious one." And thus that bereaved mother held earnest communion with her own heart, and with her

God, and when she turned away from the peaceful dead, a new strength had been given to her, and in her face there shone a holy light.

At the door of the room she met Mary, her eyes swollen with weeping. She rushed past her mother, and with frantic gestures, threw herself on her knees beside the body of her sister, and exclaimed, in bitter tones, "Anna, Anna, oh my Anna, look on me once more! Oh, say you forgive me all my petulance; all I ever did or said to wound your loving heart? Oh! speak to me, Anna, darling!" And then changing her tone to one of heart-rending mournfulness, she bowed her head upon her clasped hands, and said; "Ah! she will never speak to me more!" and the affectionate and impulsive girl abandoned herself to all the intensity of her grief. "Oh, mother!" at last she said, "what a lesson is this for me, to endeavor, hereafter, more than ever, to live in love and charity with all the world. Now, now, I would give worlds if I had never spoken a harsh or unkind word to that sainted child! Oh, mother, I thought I loved her as much as any one could love another, but I never knew till now how dear she was to me." And then suddenly

appealing once more to the dead, she said, "Oh, Anna! if I could but know you did forgive me for all my childish faults, I could better bear to be separated from you."

"She was not one to foster malice and unforgiveness in her heart," said Mrs. Benson, gently.

"I know it, mother, and that's what makes me feel so badly now. Oh, mother! if the past were to be lived over again, how differently I would live! And now," she said, with touching sadness, "I must go through the world alone, with no sister to share my joys, or soothe my sorrows. Alone! alone!"

"Hush, dear Mary! not alone! Remember what HER favorite, Keble, says:

'Who hath the Father and the Son,
May be left, but not alone.' "

"As tie after tie is loosened that binds you to earth, you should cling more closely to your Heavenly home. As friend after friend leaves you, you should be the more with that friend that sticketh closer than a brother. And oh, my darling, never does Heaven, the peace and rest of Heaven, seem so alluring to us, as when we have, as now, some proof of the un-

satisfactory fleeting nature of earthly joys. But, Mary, dear, you must not let the bitterness of this, your first sorrow, mar your enjoyment of the pleasures of life; such pleasures as a Christian, who acknowledges that he is a pilgrim and sojourner on earth, may know and partake of. In your intercourse one with another, you were happy sisters. You were not only members of the same home, but of the same household of faith, heirs of the same eternal inheritance, and I thank my God you loved each other as such. That clouds sometimes came over your happy intercourse, was the fault of poor, fallen human nature. Such clouds were not frequent, I know, only your bitterness of feeling makes them appear so, just at present."

" Well, mother, if I had never said but one angry word to her, I should feel bitterly, now that I cannot show her my repentance, by amendment of conduct."

" But you can show your repentance by your conduct towards those that are left. You will now have a new motive for gentleness and kindness, and whenever you are tempted to speak unkindly to any one, think how sorry you would be, if called to

see them go from you. Thus, my love, will the death of your dear sister be of lasting benefit to you."

"Thank you, dearest mother," said Mary ; and stooping, she softly kissed her darling Anna. She shuddered, as she felt the marble coldness of that dear face ; but she kissed her, again and again : "Dear, blessed Anna," she said ; "darling, darling sister, I shall see thee no more on earth ; but in Heaven, oh, in Heaven, may I be worthy to meet thee."

CHAPTER XV.

AND now the last services for the dead were performed, and the body of the beloved Anna was laid in the grave, never more to appear till the resurrection day. It was a bitter, bitter trial, to these fond parents, thus to see their beloved one taken from them ; but they bore themselves up under the stroke like good Christians, as they were. Again and again would Mrs. Benson apologize for her tears, by saying : "Think not I weep for my dar-

ling ; I weep for myself." With her usual calmness she resumed her customary duties ; her face wearing a more pensive expression than had been previously common to it. Often she felt a void in her heart, a sense of loneliness and depression, which nothing but devout communion with her Saviour could dispel.

Mary's sensitive nature had received a shock, which it seemed nought but time and the grace of God could remove. She became doubly affectionate towards her family and friends, more gentle and endearing to all. She grieved much for her sister, not but that she believed she was far better off than when on earth ; but they had always been together. Never, till Anna's sickness, had they been separated night or day ; they had grown in beauty, side by side ; Mary, a bright and beautiful rose ; Anna, a gentle and drooping lily. Now one was taken, and the other left.

Mrs. Benson, wishing to give Mary constant occupation, allowed her to take charge of the little pet ; and so to her was entrusted the care of his clothes and his education, except when that interfered with the duties the mother owed her child—

her engagements at his Baptism. Faithful was Mary to this trust committed to her; devoting much of her time and energies to this work. Every day she took the little boy to walk; and delighted was she to see his mind unfolding, and to watch his intelligent face, as one new truth after another dawned upon him. In these walks, flowers were his delight; and with them was always associated, in his mind, his sister Anna. "I love flowers because they are so pretty, and because Anna loved them so much," he would say, again and again. "I think God is very good, Mary, to give us so many sweet flowers."

Already had he begun to receive the truths of religion; thus early had he been taught the nature of the baptismal vows made for him, and his little heart was fully bent on doing all that was right. "I want to be a good boy," was his oft-repeated expression. Before he could read, he was taught the Confession, the Lord's Prayer, and the Creed, and when these occurred, in the order of the Church services, he lifted up his childish voice and united in them, with the rest of the congregation.

Mr. and Mrs. Benson passed their days in calm and domestic happiness. True, their hearts were often sad, as they thought of the loss they sustained when their beloved Anna was taken from them. Still they sorrowed not, as those without hope, but looked with patient longing to the time when they should all meet again, in that world where partings are no more known. Their remaining children gave them great and increasing pleasure. Mary was a lovely and intelligent girl, bright, affectionate, full of noble impulses, and daily striving, more and more, after those things which are pure and lovely, and of good report. James was a boy of uncommon promise, a gentle, playful little fellow, full of fun and frolic, yet taught, when occasion demanded, to be quiet and sober. He early showed great fondness and reverence for the Holy Temple of the Lord; and when he began to read, his whole attention, while in church, was absorbed with his prayer-book and bible; he was taught to be very still while the minister preached. And so, in calm, and intellectual, and holy pursuits, two years passed over this happy family. The day was begun and

ended with worship paid the Most High, for they had the inestimable privilege of belonging to a parish, where the church was open for "daily morning and evening prayer." Never were the cares of the household, or the pursuits of business, allowed to keep them from the house of God. Thus they had the means of grace, provided by the Church, constantly with them, and by improving these means, they were daily proceeding "in all virtue and godliness of living."

We need not bid, for cloister'd cell,
Our neighbour and our work farewell,
Nor strive to wind ourselves too high,
For sinful man beneath the sky:

The trivial round, the common task,
Would furnish all we ought to ask;
Room to deny ourselves; a road
To bring us, daily, nearer God.

Only, O Lord, in Thy dear love
Fit us for perfect rest above;
And help us, this and every day,
To live more nearly as we pray.

[*Christian Year.*

CHAPTER XVI.

I COME now to an interesting event in the life of Mary Benson, hitherto so tranquil, so even in the tenor of its ways, except when that tranquillity was interrupted by the death of her beloved sister.

The town of S—— was not far from the sea-side, and many of the inhabitants of the more inland cities came, during the summer, to breathe its free and healthy air. For two or three summers a Mr. Briggs and his family had been in S——. Ellen Briggs was about the age of Mary Benson, and between the two girls a warm friendship had sprung up. This summer the family was increased by the addition of a son, just returned from Europe. Mary Benson was fascinated by his brilliant narratives of the scenes he had witnessed in the Old World. Her warm and imaginative nature kindled at his glowing descriptions; and Mrs. Benson, who kept as earnest watch over her, as during her infancy and childhood, soon saw that a growing regard for him was rapidly

springing up in her heart. She, therefore, took occasion to put her on her guard, while yet her affections were under her control.

"Mr. Briggs is quite an addition to your little circle, Mary, dear," she said, one day.

"Mary blushed. "Oh, yes, mother! he is very interesting and amiable, and all that."

"What do you mean by 'all that'?" asked her mother, playfully.

"Oh, I mean good-tempered, intelligent, handsome; in short everything he ought to be."

"Everything, Mary?"

Mary turned an inquiring glance to her mother: "Do you know anything against him, mother?"

"Is he a young man of strict religious principles, do you think?"

"Why, mother, I never saw or heard anything that would lead me to think he was not."

"But you know, dear, he is not a Churchman."

"He attends church here, mother."

"Well, because his friends and acquaintances do so, I suppose."

"Are you not a little uncharitable, dear mother, in ascribing such a motive to him?"

"Am I? I hope not; for did you not hear his sister Ellen tell, the other day, that Henry said he did not like the Church service, it was so tedious; and that he was always glad when the time for the sermon came."

"Well, mother," said Mary, gently, "is that more than other objectors to the Church say?"

"No, my dear, I suppose not. But how should you like such feelings against the Church to be fostered by your husband?"

A rosy blush suffused Mary's face, and without raising her eyes from her work, she softly said, "Husband! mother? Are you not rather precipitate?" And yet the sweetest of smiles played around her mouth as she asked the question.

"No, dear, I do not think I am. I would not have my daughter so vain, as to think that every young man who pays her any attention, is about (to use romantic language) 'to lay his heart at her feet'; but still I would have every young lady, whenever she is thrown into more than ordinary intercourse with a gentleman, soberly and seriously ask herself the question, Are his principles, his disposition and character, such as I could wish my husband to have?

And if her conscience says no, whatever her heart, her imagination, prompts her to say, she should then strictly see to it, that her affections are not given to such a man."

"But if they are already given?" asked Mary, in a low tone.

"Then crush them in the very bud, rather than have an ill-assorted union."

Mary turned pale at the unusual vehemence of her mother's tone, but said nothing.

"Young people have too many romantic notions about what they call 'falling in love.' With many it is often a 'fall,' in earnest, so heedlessly do they allow their affections to be carried away. And yet I do injustice to the word 'affections'; when I use it in that sense, I ought rather to say their fancy. Love, pure love, such love as should exist between a husband and wife, should be founded on esteem—respect. This esteem and respect are called forth by the good and estimable qualities of an individual."

"But is every one so constituted that his or her good qualities are, at one glance, brought to view?"

"Certainly not. Some strike at once by their

brilliancy, their amiable qualities, their good sense, their intelligence; but are you not sure, that on farther acquaintance with such, they may not have traits of character with which you could not assimilate? You are unusually silent, Mary, you, who generally have a word to say on every subject."

"Why, mother, this is an entirely new subject to me, and one on which I have never thought, at least," she said, with her usual truthfulness, "not till lately."

"Then you have begun to think about it?"

"Why, mother, to tell you the truth, I have never, till now, met a gentleman whom I thought I could—I was going to say, fancy; but I know you will laugh at the word, and say I am romantic—I who never read a regular romance in my life—so, then, I will say esteem, instead of fancy."

"And are you quite sure that, on long and intimate acquaintance with Mr. Henry Briggs, you could esteem and respect him?"

"Why, mother," said Mary, looking up in alarm, "do you know anything bad about him?"

"No, my love, as I said before, nothing; but even if, in everything else he is, what you would

have him to be, and is wanting in the all-essential point, religious principle, would you, a Christian girl, brought up in the Church, marry him ?”

“ But, mother, he may be a good Christian, and not be a Churchman ; mayn’t he ?”

“ Certainly, my dear ; you could not think me so uncharitable, as to say he must necessarily be a Churchman to be a Christian. But, even allowing that he is one of the best and purest Christians that ever lived, could you two, with your different religious sentiments, assimilate ? And where is the harmony of domestic life, if there is not similarity of sentiments on subjects of the most vital importance ?”

“ Perhaps we should not differ in essentials,” said Mary, faintly.

“ What do you call ‘ essential,’ my dear ? Would it not be ‘ essential,’ for instance, if your husband should deny the baptism with which you have been baptized ? Would it be nothing, that when the Lord’s-day came, he should wish to go one way, you another ? You will have to promise to obey your husband, Mary. What if, in time, he lay his commands upon you to leave your Church, and go

with him to his place of worship, what would you do in that case?"

Mary sat thoughtful and silent for a few minutes, and then said, with a beaming smile: "Mother, I can't think Henry Briggs would do that."

"Why not, dear? Other husbands have been as exacting; and even if he should not go to the length of a command, would not what you knew to be his wishes, have some practical effect upon you?"

"Why, mother, it seems to me here is a case, where there can be no hesitation, no cavilling. Even if it should come to a command, would not a wife be justified in refusing compliance?"

"A wife promises to obey, Mary."

"Yes, mother; but not to obey man rather than God. For instance, let me suppose my own case: Were I to marry a sectarian, and he should wish me to leave the Church, and go with him, I should reason in this way: 'I have been brought up in the Church; I believe it is *the* Church; I could not, therefore, conscientiously leave it. Besides, I love the Church services. By them my devotional spirit is quickened; and were I to give them up, I am

afraid I should not find other services productive of such good results.' No, mother, I am satisfied that in such a case I could be firm ; for, mother," she said, with solemnity, "I should not dare to peril my soul, to comply with any one's wishes, or even to obey a command."

" Well, my daughter, I am willing to believe that in such a case you might be firm ; but would not your domestic happiness be in danger in such a conflict ? Nay, would not your religious character suffer ; for, might not your husband think that a singular religion, which would not allow you to worship God, except in the manner you have been accustomed to ?"

" Surely, mother," said Mary, reproachfully, "you would not advise me, in such a case, to give up the Church, ' my Mother Church, in whose kind, upholding arms' I have so long been nurtured !"

" No, dear, far from it ; but my advice would be, not to put yourself at all in such a situation, where there would be even the slightest probability of your being called upon to give up the Church. I have known cases where husbands have promised not to interfere with their wives' peculiar religious

sentiments ; and yet, who quite forgot that promise, after the first ardor of their love had passed away ; and who then began to wish them to leave their Church, and go with them to other places of worship. Now this is a case which, in my estimation, would admit of no manner of doubt. Let the wife cleave to her Church, and let the husband keep to his promise. I have known other cases, where the female, through thoughtlessness or forgetfulness, neglected to make any provision for such occurrences after marriage ; and then she has suddenly found, to her dismay, that the husband has a way of his own, in relation to religious matters ; and that he intends to enforce that way, even though he compel her to give up the Church in which she was baptized. Here, too, I think the wife perfectly justifiable in refusing compliance. If she thinks her religious principles endangered by leaving the Church, then I say, let her still cling to it, in spite of opposition !”

“ Even when she has promised to obey ?” asked Mary, roguishly.

“ Even when she has promised to obey ; for here a higher duty is called in question, a duty of obeying God first, rather than man. But I will take even a

stronger case. Suppose your father should now turn Methodist, or Presbyterian, or Baptist, do you suppose it would be my duty to leave my Church and go with him? Unquestionably not, even though he wished, nay, commanded it.

"But some might say, mother, that you ought to conciliate, for the sake of domestic peace."

"Ah, Mary, that would be a false peace, which would be purchased at the sacrifice of religious duty. However, the first two cases are cases that need never to occur, for as I said before, neither you, nor any one else, who is a member of the Church, should put herself in a position where there might be even a possibility of your being ever called upon to give up the Church."

"Oh, mother," said Mary, while the tears slowly gathered in her eyes, "not even if I have to sacrifice my earthly happiness!"

"Is your earthly happiness, as you call it, Mary, so much at stake? Is Henry Briggs more than a friend to you? You are not engaged, Mary?"

"No, indeed, mother! You cannot believe, that companion as you have been to me, I should allow myself to give away my affections, without first

confiding in you ? Still I confess to you, as I told you before, I have never seen any whom I like so well."

"But is your attachment so strong that you cannot break from it without a pang?"

"Oh, mother, do not think me weak, but it would be something of a trial. Nevertheless," and her tone grew sad, "I have met trials before ; God gave me strength to bear them, and He will not forsake me now. Mother, I could give him up, if the sacrifice was called for. But is such a sacrifice necessary ? Look at Mrs. Cleaveland ; she married a man opposed to the Church, but she never left it ; and see, her reward, in one sense, is already given to her, for her husband is now a devout communicant in the Church."

"Granted, my dear, and I could tell you of many more such instances ; but I can also point you to others who have not met with the happy experience of Mrs. Cleaveland. Take Mrs. Green, for example. How much attached to the Church she seemed to be ! Nay, I will not say ' seemed,' but how attached she really was ! She married, as you well know, an estimable man, one whom she could love, esteem,

nay, even fancy. True, he was a Presbyterian, but Lizzy had no doubt she could easily turn him from what she considered his error. Who could ever resist her sweet fascinations ? Not her husband, she thought, who was so ardently attached to her. But what has been the result ? They have been married four years ; Mr: Green is as much attached to his faith as ever ; while, I am sorry to say, Lizzy has lost the strength of her first love to the Church ?"

" But you know, mother, she is such a gentle, yielding, loveable creature, she cannot bear to hold out for a moment against any one she loves."

" Well, then, I say, she did wrong in putting herself in a situation, where the alternative must be, either to resist her husband or leave the Church."

" But she so dearly loved Mr. Green," said Mary, in an apologizing tone.

" Better have actually torn him from her heart, ere she had been united to him, than to have run the risk of destroying domestic happiness, nay, of endangering her own soul ; for, did you not hear her sister say, that Lizzy seemed to be losing the piety that had so long characterized her ? Rather than brave the opposition of her husband, by going to church,

she has become lax in the observance of her outward duties, careless in her attendance upon the means of grace. She has two children ; they have never been baptized. She, of course, wishes them to be baptized in the Church ; Mr. Green, according to his way. Who is to give up ? She says she cannot, he says the same. Who can foresee the effects of this upon the future welfare of the children ? Should they grow up in sin, whose would be the blame for not having had them early received into God's holy Church ? She says she cannot conscientiously decide to leave the Church ; yet she has not the moral courage to cling to it, in opposition to her husband's wishes. Nay, in her submissiveness, she feels that, as a wife, she is bound to obey him ; and there it remains. She is not, cannot be, happy in this state of vacillation ; and I repeat, what I before said, if there is congeniality of thought on every other point than that of religion, the happiness of domestic life is in danger of being sapped by that being wanting."

Mary looked very grave, but said nothing.

Her mother went on : "Take yet other cases. There are Mrs. Adams and Mrs. Sweet, both having

been communicants of the Church at the time of their marriage ; yet both marrying men opposed to the Church. They have fallen in with the inclinations of their husbands ; and what is the result ? Speaking in all charity, but by that rule our divine Saviour gave us, of judging by the fruits, where is their religion ? They have made light of the Sacraments of the Church, by ceasing to go to the Holy Communion. Their baptismal vows have been forgotten ; for they greedily follow ‘the vain pomp and glory of the world.’ And more than all, they ‘do despite’ to the blood of the Lamb of God, by allowing themselves to attend places of worship where their Redeemer is despoiled of His divinity. Their outward duties of worshiping God in His own Church, have thus been given up ; what their private duties are, is known but to Him who knoweth all things.”

“ But, mother, might not the objection be raised, that such was not a valid piety, which could be lost in this way ? ”

“ Yes, dear ; and it is the very objection made by those who condemn Churchmen as formalists ; but I ask you, is it not evident that the effects I

have been speaking about, would naturally follow from the cause of neglecting known duties ? Let me take your own case : You have never been accustomed to attend any other services than those of the Church. Well, supposing you place yourself in such a situation, that you think it necessary occasionally to go to a place of worship, where everything is as different as possible from the services of your own Church. Would not that very difference excite in you a curiosity, a feeling, I can hardly say what ; but something quite different from the spirituality which should ever attend us in the house of God ? Would you go away feeling that the cravings of your immortal nature had been satisfied ; that your devotions had been quickened ; your knowledge of divine things increased ? The change would be so great to you, you would readily see you had not been profited by the services, as you ought to have been. Well, another Sunday you would think you might stay entirely at home, or perhaps go to church but once. How would you employ yourself that day ? It is very difficult for a person so to regulate his thoughts, his conduct, his actions, as to have them all in harmony with the

day, even where one has the helps of the sanctuary ; how much more difficult, then, when one abstains from using these helps ! Once begin, of your own accord, to stay at home on Sunday ; once begin to neglect your outward duties, and I care not how strict your piety may have been, you will soon begin to lose its fresh tone. When once the downward path is entered, it is easier to keep in it than to go back. Have I made it plain to you, Mary ?"

Mary had sat very thoughtful, while her mother had been speaking ; but now she said, " yes, mother, I see it all very plainly, but I must take a few days seriously to think upon it."

Mrs. Benson said nothing farther on the subject, so Mary went out to take her usual walk with James.

CHAPTER XVII.

THIS long conversation with her mother, had opened new veins of thought to Mary. For several days after it she seemed thoughtful and sad, as though something weighed heavily upon her mind. Her mother made no comments on her appearance, knowing that she would tell her all her troubles, whenever she thought best. Mary spent much of the time, when at home, in her own room ; and often took long walks to the sea-side, for that was her favorite spot for meditation. There was, at times, a look upon her face, that plainly showed there was a conflict within ; but Mr. and Mrs. Benson had faith to believe, that the good seeds implanted in her heart would not run to waste, now that she was called upon to make a decision on one of the most important subjects ever brought before the youthful mind.

One day Mary came home from making some visits, and Mrs. Benson, with a mother's quick eye,

instantly perceived that something out of the usual course had occurred, for her face was flushed, and her eyes were red with weeping. She went directly upstairs, and did not come down till more than an hour had elapsed. Then her face was calm, though very pale ; but in her eyes there shone a pure, a holy light, that perfectly irradiated her whole countenance. She went up to her mother, with a firm, though slow step, and gently laying her hand upon her shoulder, said, in a low tone, " Mother, the conflict is over ; I have given him up." Her voice faltered slightly, but her eyes turned not away from the searching glance of her mother.

" And you are happy in your decision, Mary ? "

" Not happy, exactly, mother, but satisfied. My reason makes the decision ; my heart will, in time, yield to it. Nay, mother, I may say, too, I am happy, for ought not every one to feel happy when conscious of doing what is right ? "

" Certainly, my love. And, Mary dear, will you not tell me just how it was ? Of course, though I have said nothing on this subject for several days, I was aware a conflict was going on within your

breast; but I would not speak for fear you might think I was wishing to influence your decision."

"And did you doubt at all, mother, how the conflict would end?"

"Why, I knew if you consulted merely the promptings of your heart, you might be biased by your feelings; but that if you once yielded to the calm sway of reason, all would be right. And now, dear daughter, tell me all you think best for me to know."

"Well, mother, after our long talk, the other day, I was determined to watch Henry Briggs narrowly, to see if there was anything in his disposition or character that I could not like; and, mother, I will do him the justice to say, that I believe him noble, excellent in all things, though I am not sure that I am quite satisfied as to the depth of his religious character, for it sometimes seems to me, that with his vivacious disposition, his happy spirit is a little the result of animal feeling. But in this I would not be uncharitable, for, without doubt, in scrutinizing me, if he chose to take that trouble, he might find me wanting in many more respects than I could him. But, mother, I feel sure, that in marrying him I

should be obliged to have some conflicts about the Church ; for, with all his amiability, I find that he is wedded to his own faith ; and if he is sincere, mother, and thinks it right, he is not to be blamed, is he ?”

“ Not, if after looking well into the subject, he decides upon the conviction of his understanding ; but if he is prejudiced by his early associations, and remains what he is, simply because he was brought up in that religious persuasion, may he not then be blamed, Mary ?”

“ Well, mother, be that as it may, I weighed the matter duly and carefully ; and I may say, prayerfully, too, deciding between my Church and one of my dearest friends ; and, mother, I found I could not give up my own dear Church for any one.”

Her mother kissed her fervently, and said, “ you have made a wise decision, dearest. But how did you let Mr. Briggs know ?”

“ Why, this very afternoon, at Mrs. King’s, I met Ellen and Henry, and the conversation turned upon the marriage of Mr. Whitney and Eliza Perry. Mrs. King said, laughingly, ‘ I am told they have begun to differ already, for last Sunday afternoon she went

to her meeting, he to his.' 'Oh,' said Mr. Briggs, 'that was because it was communion day, for she cannot commune with her husband, because she is a Baptist.' 'Oh dear,' said Ellen Briggs, 'how badly they must feel, not to be able to kneel at the same altar.' I had not before spoken on the subject, so I ventured to say, that I thought two persons of different religious sentiments had no right to marry. Henry glanced at me, and I could see, mother, that he grew a little pale, although I dared not look at him; and he said quickly, 'but if they differ in non-essentials, Miss Benson?' 'Ah!' said I, plucking up courage to speak out, 'can anything be non-essential which affects the interest of the immortal soul?' I dared not say any more, for I was afraid my voice would betray my emotion; but when I got up to come home, Henry started, too, and came out when I did. 'Are you in a hurry to go home?' he asked. 'Not particularly,' I answered. 'Will you walk with me to the beach, then?' he said. I immediately assented, for I thought the explanation might as well come then as ever; and we walked along, neither of us speaking for some time. At last he broke the silence, by saying,

abruptly, 'then you really think Mr. and Mrs. Whitney did wrong in marrying ?' 'I think it is a dangerous experiment,' I said, summoning up all my strength to speak with firmness. 'Too dangerous to be tried by others, do you think ?' he asked, stealing a look under my bonnet : 'In most cases, perhaps in all, yes,' I said, still unfalteringly, though my limbs trembled so I could scarcely walk. 'It is one you would be unwilling to try then, is it ?' said he, with a laugh, which I plainly perceived was forced. I saw, then, that the crisis had really arrived ; and mustering up all my resolution, I said in as firm a tone as I could command, 'It is. I feel that I ought to be jealous of any one who would stand between me and my God.' 'Mary,' he said, earnestly, 'what do you mean ? You speak as though you thought you might some time be in danger of marrying one who would interfere with the duties you owe to your Creator. You certainly would not marry an irreligious man.' 'No, Henry,' I said, 'I would not, God helping me, neither would I run any risk of uniting myself to one, who I feared might not look upon the Church of my love as I do.' I saw he was startled by what I said, and fearing he was going to

say more, I said, ‘It is enough ; let us change the subject.’ He abruptly left me, without saying anything but ‘Good afternoon.’ You do not think I was too abrupt, mother dear ?” Mary anxiously asked.

“No, darling ; and I am glad it is now all over.”

“But is it all over, do you think ? I am so afraid he will some time renew the subject ; and oh, mother ;” and she raised her eyes, swimming with tears, to her mother’s face, “if he should plead with me, I am afraid of my own strength ; and that I could not resist as I ought.”

“Lay aside your own strength, then, my love ; and cast yourself upon Him who has promised that His grace is sufficient for you. If you have carefully pondered the subject, maturely weighed it, and now feel satisfied that you have made the right decision, keep close to it. Your feelings may for awhile suffer ; but be assured, in the end, you will never have cause to repent that you decided as you did.”

“Mother, if it was a much greater sacrifice than it is, I feel that I could have made it for the love I

bear God's holy Church. Oh, mother," and she clasped her hands in her earnestness, "in that Church I was born and nurtured, fed with spiritual food ; in that Church I was baptized and confirmed ; there I have been strengthened in my heavenward course, by her sacraments, services and instructions ; and now shall I leave her for an earthly love, or allow a creature to step between me and the mother I prize so much ? Never !" she said with enthusiasm ; and raising her beautiful eyes to Heaven, "so help me, Thou, who never leavest those who put their trust in Thee !"

Mr. Briggs came the next day to make his parting call, having been suddenly summoned away, as he said. Mary met him with calmness. Mrs. Benson was in the room, and she helped to make the conversation cheerful and unrestrained. No allusion was made to the subject of the day before ; and, after a short call, he rose to take leave : "Good-bye, Mrs. Benson," he said, extending his hand to her ; "Good-bye, Mary," he said, in a low tone, raising for one moment his eyes, with a mournful look, to her face, "Good-bye ; God bless you."

And before Mary could summon up fortitude to speak, he was gone.

"Oh, mother," she said, throwing herself into her mother's arms, while the tears streamed down her pale cheeks, "is not this almost too much?"

Her mother kissed her fervently ; and pressing her warmly to her heart, said : "God give thee strength, beloved one, to bear this and all else that may be laid upon you."

CHAPTER XVIII.

GREAT was the sensation among the young people of S—— at the sudden departure of Mr. Briggs. Mary kept her own counsel ; for she had never been in the habit of confiding her cherished thoughts and feelings to her young companions. Her mother was her bosom friend ; and to her she poured out all her joys and sorrows. Many of her young friends had thought there was "a serious attachment" between Henry Briggs and Mary Benson ; but as neither of the two ever lisped a word on the

subject, they had nothing but their own observation to found that belief on ; and, as it was evident he went away anything but an accepted lover, the subject, after a few days, was entirely dropped.

Mary soon recovered her usual serenity and calmness ; and once more gave herself up to her duties with unremitting zeal. Never did they seem so delightful to her as now. In the education of her young brother, all the powers of her mind, all the virtues of her Christian character, were called into action. She accustomed herself to bear, with gentle patience, the little trials of her situation. James was initiated by her into such mysteries of knowledge as were adapted to his youthful capacities. Her own love of intellectual pursuits made this task delightful to her ; and two or three hours each day were regularly set apart for this purpose. But, most of all, was she interested in his moral training. With the kind care of a mother, she watched the traits of his character, and aided her parents in cherishing the virtues he already possessed, and in trying to subdue the faults incident to human nature. Was he inclined to be selfish, greedy or covetous, not, for one moment, were

such faults to be indulged. The Church taught proper abstinence and self-denial ; and by practising these, selfishness and greediness were subdued. Was he proud, or vain, or forward, he was taught to think of others more highly than of himself; not to be puffed up or assuming in his own merits, being daily told that “God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace to the humble.” From his not attending school, he was spared much intercourse with boys of his own age. Still he had some playmates ; and if he was guilty of any misconduct towards them, he was not allowed to play with them for some days.

By the blessing of God on the constant teachings of his mother and sister, aided, as they were, by the Holy Spirit, he daily proceeded “in all virtue and godliness of living.” He was, as far as man could judge, a Christian in heart and in deed. True, he had his infirmities of temper ; what Christian, even older in years and in grace, has not ? We are not perfect ourselves ; why then expect perfection in others ? If to understand that we are sinners by nature, and by practice ; if to trust fully and freely in the all-sufficient merits of a Divine Redeemer :

if to know that all our attempts to do right, without God's Spirit to help us, are fruitless ; if to watch the risings of sin in our hearts, and to pray and to struggle against them ; if to strive, as far as we can, to bring all things in subjection to God's most holy will ; if this is religion, then had James Benson, though a child in years, known what it was to be a Christian. Happy boy, to be hourly instructed in that knowledge that pertaineth to life everlasting ; to have some one to take him by the hand and lead him in that narrow path in which all must walk who would seek after Heaven and heavenly things !

Happy parents, to be blessed with such children ! They were given to them by God, to be trained up in his Church below for his kingdom above. One was an angel of light. She lived a gentle, loving life, and died a happy death. She was not, for God took her. Two were left, and they shone like bright lights on their parents' downward path in life. They had early been given to God in holy Baptism, and the vows the parents took upon themselves they conscientiously performed. Their children were trained up in the way they should go, and thus far they had not departed from it ; and if we believe God's promises, they will not in time to come.

CHAPTER XIX.

IN the course of time Mary Benson found another tie to bind her to the things of earth. The son of her worthy Pastor had just completed his Theological studies, and was about to take upon him the vows of a minister of the Lord Jesus Christ. From their earliest childhood they had been as brother and sister. Now their friendship, so well tested by time, began to ripen into a holier, warmer feeling, and Mary was ready to acknowledge to her mother, that in her intercourse with Henry Briggs her heart had not been touched as it now was. How different were the feelings with which she regarded the associate of her early years ! She knew him to be kind and affectionate in his disposition, fervent in his piety, untiring in his efforts for the good of mankind. Brought up in the Church, his sentiments on all subjects pertaining to it assimilated with her's.

Should she now hesitate to link her fate with his ? He was soon to consecrate himself to the work of

winning souls to Christ ; and should she not, as far as she could, help him in this great and glorious cause ? These questions, so all-important in their results, now weighed much upon her mind. She knew that Thomas Potter was attached to her ; her woman's instinct told her that ; and that it was no boyish love he felt for her, but such a love as should exist between two persons, the nearest to each other in life.

Taking counsel from her mother's former advice, she looked well into her own heart, before she would sanction his hopes, by giving him any encouragement whatever. She felt he was in character all that she could respect, as well as love. Earnestly she prayed for Divine guidance and assistance, lest she should decide too hastily in what might color her whole future life. At last she determined, in her own mind, to leave it all in the hands of Him who ordereth all things for the best. She would meet Thomas Potter, as she always had met him, with the frank, warm affection which had characterized their intercourse. And she did meet him thus. As an intellectual companion, he found her society exceedingly interesting ; as a Christian, her own attain-

ments in religious knowledge were a pattern to him. In fact, as the inhabitants of the town of S—— said, "They seemed made for each other."

Let us for a moment listen to the questions Thomas Potter put to his own heart: "Was Mary Benson willing to share the trials, the privations of a poor minister's life? That as an intellectual companion, a warm, loving friend, she would be a help-meet for him he had no doubt; but would she be willing to make the sacrifices she would be obliged to make, if she married him?" That was the question, and it was a question that could not be answered by one alone; and so he resolved to solve, at once, his doubts on the subject.

"Will you walk with me to the beach, Mary?" he said, as he went in one evening.

There was that in his look and tone that told Mary something out of the ordinary course had occurred, or was about to occur, and she felt, at once, that her earthly destiny was then to be decided. It was not without a little fluttering and trepidation that she put on her bonnet to accompany him. Soon they were on the beach, with "the sea, the ever changing sea," before them.

"How much I shall miss the sea, Mary, when I go to my inland home?" he said, after a short pause. "I have always loved the sea so much! Its voice, harsh and rude as it often seems to some, is music to me."

They stopped and silently watched the waves as they rolled, one after another, to the land.

With a serious tone and look he broke the silence, saying, "The sea ever seems to me an image of life, now calm and gentle, scarcely ruffled by a breeze; and now boisterous and tempestuous, as though all the winds of Heaven were let loose upon it. How placid is life to some! How full of the storms of time, and the winds of adversity is it to others; and yet even to these a calm, at times, comes, and the glorious sun shines upon them, tinging them with its own bright hues. How I should love to have a study near the sea-side?" he added.

"Would you shout, then, like Demosthenes?" asked Mary, with a playful look.

"No; but I would learn many lessons of God's power and goodness from the sea. Should I ever be at a loss for a subject for thought, with that always before me? How I love the sea!" again he

said, his face lighting up with enthusiasm. " You, too, love it, Mary ?" he said, inquiringly.

" Yes, much, very much, both for its own sake, and because," and here her voice softened, and tears came into her loving eyes; " Dear Anna loved it, too. Do you not remember, Thomas, how even her placid nature was stirred to passionate delight, when rambling by the sea-side ? Was she not a darling child ?" and she raised her eyes, full of tears, to his face.

He pressed her hand in silence, and after leaving her to weep unrestrained awhile, he said, " How freshly you preserve in your memory everything relating to her ?"

" Oh, Thomas !" she said, " may you never know the pain, the grief, I felt in parting from her. It was my first lesson in life's sorrows ; it taught me how to suffer ;" and a shudder passed over her, and she shut her eyes, from which the tears were raining fast.

" Dear Mary !" he said, soothingly, " you sorrowed not as those without hope. You knew she was prepared for death."

" Oh, yes !" she answered, and a gleam of hope

lighted up her tearful face: "I did not doubt that; but the blow came with such stunning effect upon me!"

"Yet you knew enough of life, Mary, to know that all are liable, at any time, to be called upon to meet such sorrows."

"Oh, Thomas!" she exclaimed, interrupting him, "it was not that; but you know how rash and impulsive I have always been; and I know, I feel, I was not always as gentle, as loving to her, as I ought to have been; and, oh! when I was called to see her die, I could have given up my very life, if I had never spoken a harsh or unkind word to that sweet child;" and her whole frame shook with emotion.

"Pray, calm yourself, my dear Mary," he said, seating her on a rock; "you must not look so seriously on the faults of your youth. Anna always loved you too dearly for you ever to have been so very unkind to her. And now tell me, Mary, if her death, bitter as it was for you to bear, did not teach you a lesson, besides that of trying to be reconciled to the Divine will?"

"Oh, yes," she said, and her face cleared up, "it

taught me a lesson I never shall forget. How much our darling mother used to tell us about being always gentle, and kind, and conciliating ; and I would listen to her with reverence for her teachings, though it was hard for me to learn the lesson ; but I thank God, I believe I have better learnt it now, for whenever an unkind thought or word comes to me, I see Anna's gentle, loving eyes, fixed upon me ; and I remember all my bitter thoughts, when I was beside her dying bed, and then God gives me strength to put the evil things far from me. And now, Thomas," she said, wiping away her tears, "I am ashamed of having troubled you so long with my selfish sorrow ; but there are times when her image comes so powerfully before me, that I can speak or think of nothing else. Anna loved the sea ; I cannot look upon it without thinking of her. She loved the stars, and, nightly, when I look upon their brightness, I seem to see her angel eyes smiling down upon me ; and in the rustling of the night breeze, I hear her soft voice whispering, ' patience, thou fainting heart ! ' Anna loved flowers ; they are types of her own sweetness and worth ; and for her sake, if not for their own, I cherish them. And you should see little James's love

for them, and his enthusiasm, when I read to him Keble's beautiful hymn to 'the flowers of the field,' beginning,

'Sweet nurslings of the vernal skies.'

It is hard to tell which loves Keble best, that little boy, with his poetic temperament, or myself, who have made him my companion ever since I have been old enough to appreciate his beauties."

And now they turned their steps homeward, and then Thomas Potter told Mary Benson his thoughts and wishes in relation to his future life. She smiled, and then sighed, as he pictured, in glowing terms, his anticipations of the future, and his idea of what the life of a clergyman should be.

"Why do you first smile, and then sigh, Mary?" he said, stopping in the midst of a sentence.

"I can scarcely analyze my feelings," she said; "but I smiled at your earnestness, and I sighed to—" and there she stopped, blushed, and looked on the ground.

"To what?" he asked.

"To think how few there are, Thomas, who are capable of doing so much to make home and life

happy, as you seem to expect." And she dared not look into his face.

I need not enlarge upon what further passed between them. Thomas Potter thought he did not expect too much of earthly happiness, if he had Mary Benson for his life's companion, while, if she heaved another sigh that evening, it was because she thought of leaving her dear home for another.

That very evening, Mr. and Mrs. Benson promised their only daughter's hand to the son of their worthy Rector, and most esteemed friend. True, their tears fell, as they remembered they must be separated from her; but to whom could they give her with so much pleasure? Mary had high, though proper ideas, of what a clergyman's wife should be; and she had before her a worthy example in the good Mrs. Potter. "If I but walk in her steps," she whispered to Thomas, as he took his leave, "I shall be satisfied; for she is, in all things, just what a person in her station should be."

In due time, Thomas Potter received from authorized hands his commission to preach the Gospel; and he took up his abode in a small parish, about thirty miles from S— where he labored faithfully

and diligently, till he had "purchased to himself a good degree;" and then he was admitted to the holy order of Priests.

His marriage soon followed ; and Mary Benson next found herself in a new home, and surrounded by strange faces. Her heart was sorely rent at parting with her beloved father and mother, and her darling Jamie ; though she was so near them, she might hope to see them quite often.

We have now traced the life of Mary Benson, from childhood to womanhood. We have seen how the spirit of God, given to her in holy Baptism, kept her in the right way, by the constant use of the means of grace, provided in the services and sacraments of the Church. Those principles, implanted in her childhood, had grown with her growth, and strengthened with her strength ; and she now shone in the eyes of all a lovely, Christian woman ; earnest in all her endeavors to do what was right and good ; gentle and kind and winning in her intercourse with her husband's parishioners ; in short, a help-meet for a Christian Pastor. And here we leave her ; conscious that she who has been a dutiful and affectionate daughter, will be a kind and loving

wife ; that she who was taught to render obedience to her parents and her God, will, in her turn, command her children to do the same ; and we earnestly hope that, while as a daughter, she was a jewel in the eyes of her parents, so her children will hereafter be bright jewels in the crown of her Redeemer.

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OR
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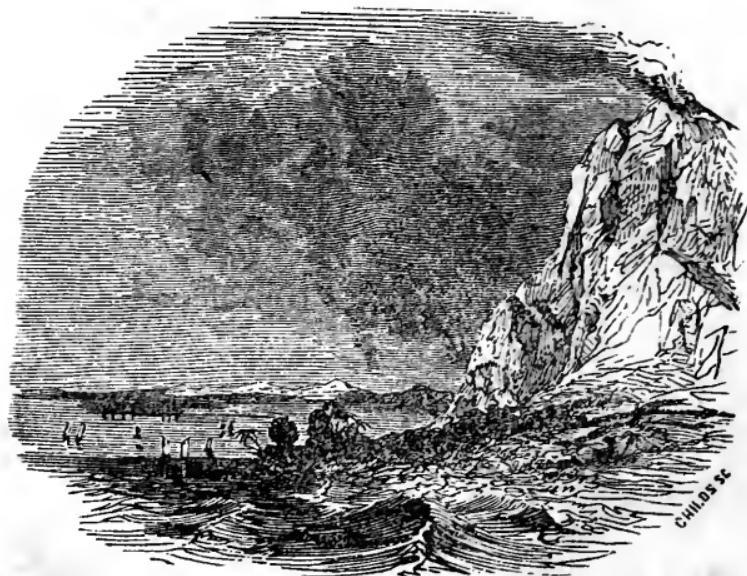
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